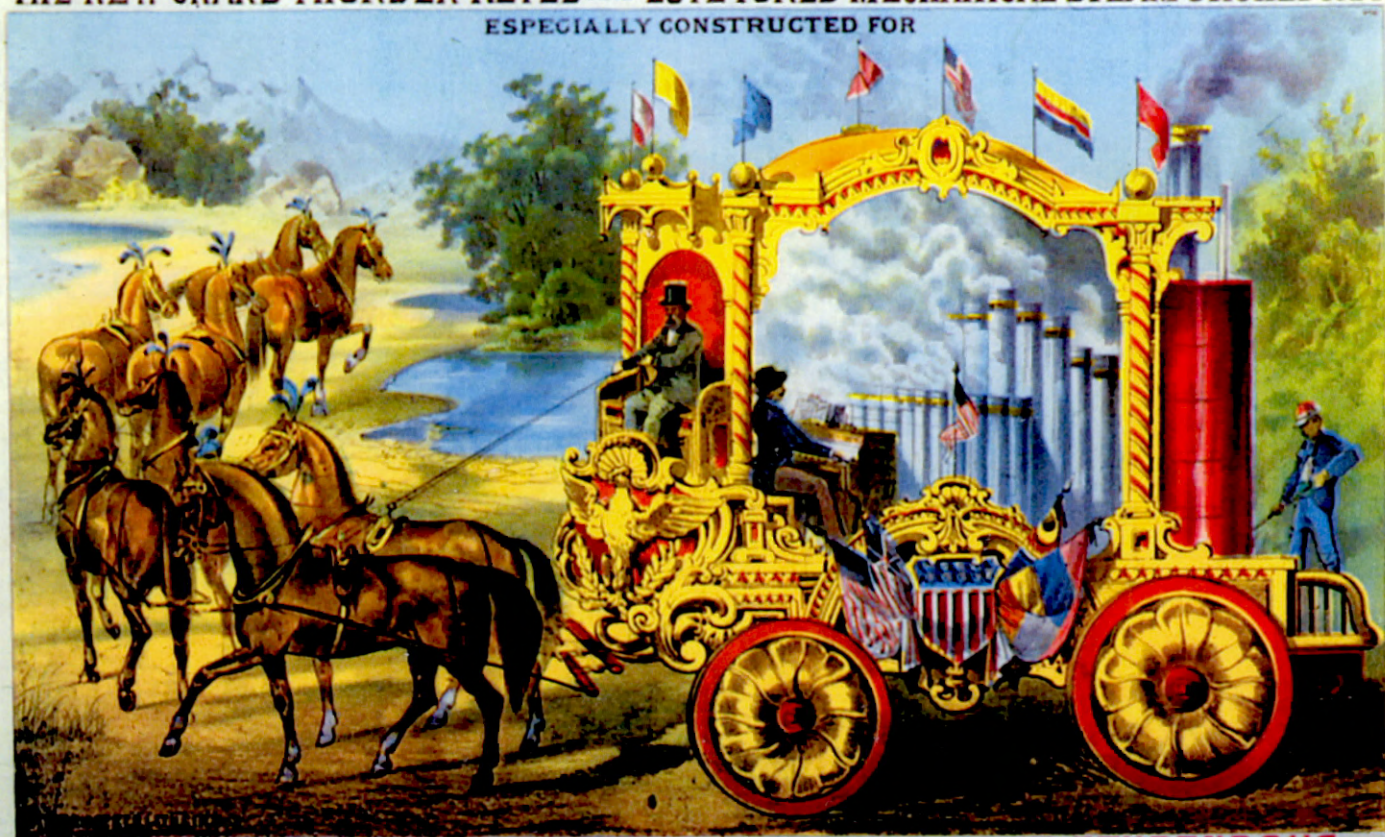


BANDWAGON

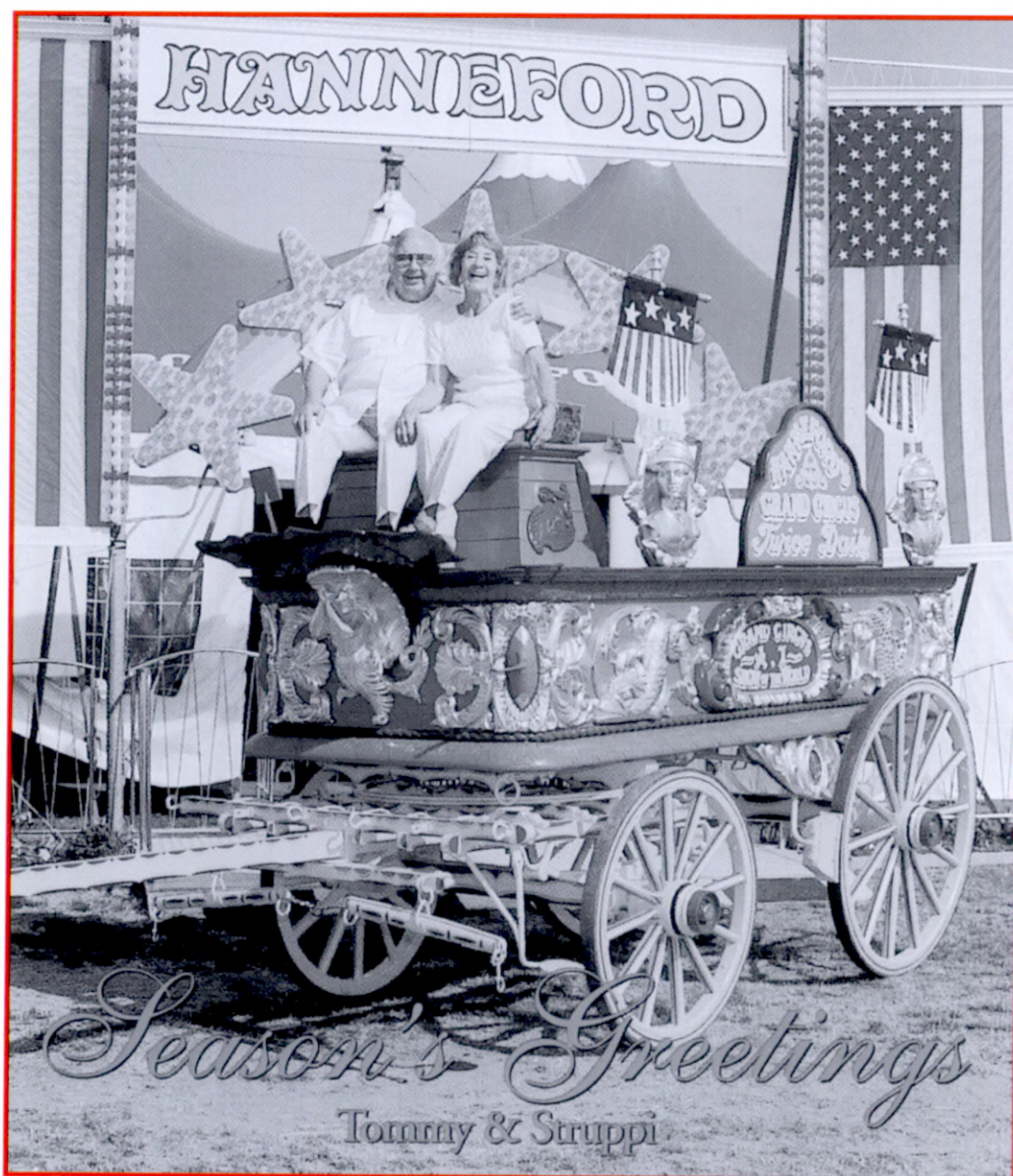
**THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.**

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2002

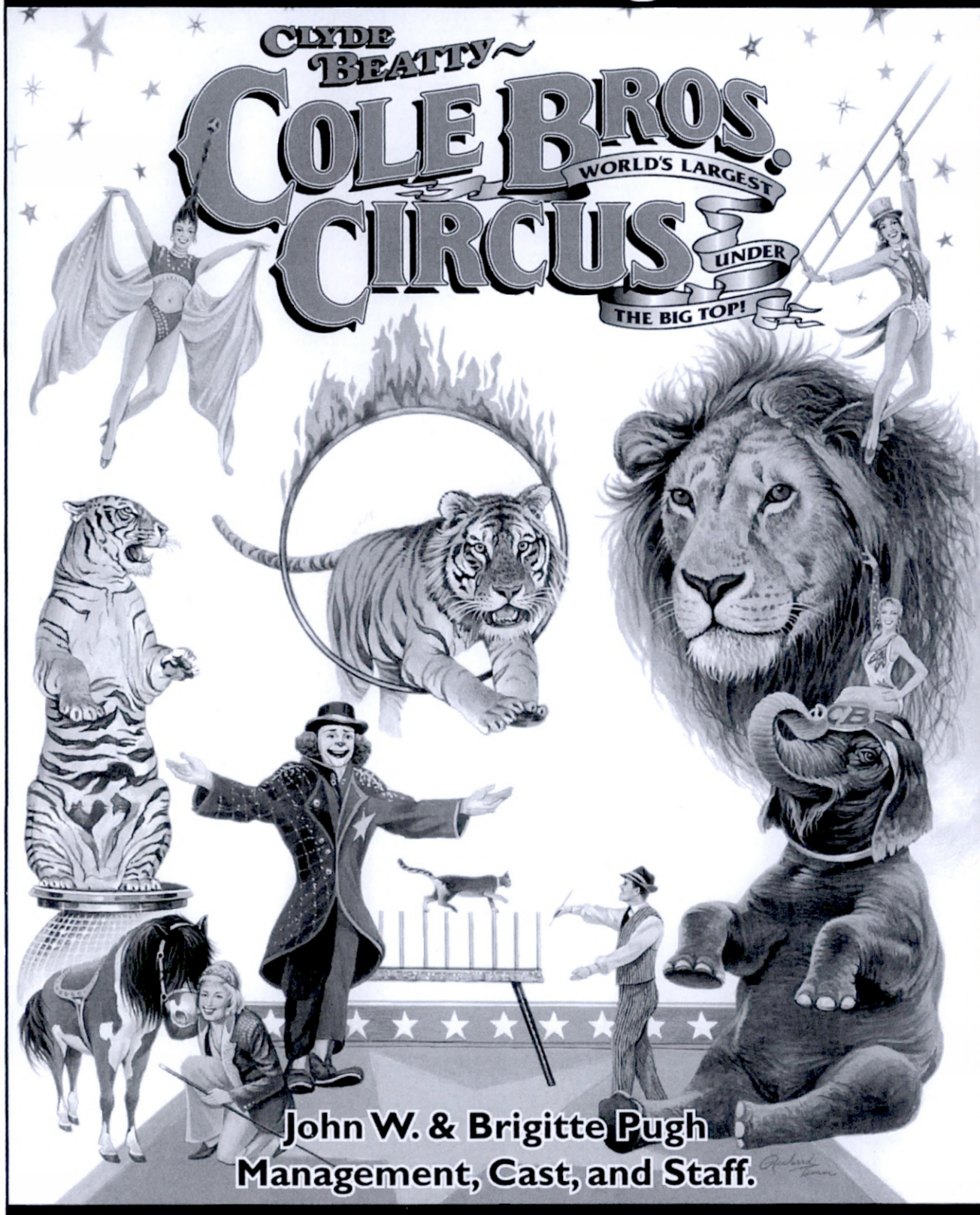
THE NEW GRAND THUNDER-KEYED AND LUTE-TONED MECHANICAL STEAM ORCHESTRA
ESPECIALLY CONSTRUCTED FOR



THE NEW GREAT PACIFIC. THE MOST STUPENDOUS
MENAGERIE & CIRCUS EVER ORGANIZED.



Season's Greetings 2002!



Ethical Considerations for the Conservation of Circus Posters

By Neil C. Cockerline

This article was published in the May 1995 Western Association for Art Conservation Newsletter. It was written for professional conservators, so some of the terminology may not be understood at first read. The author states that any conservation treatments should be carried out by a professional conservator, especially upon posters of extreme age and/or rarity.

Neil C. Cockerline received a graduate degree in Fine Arts Conservation from the State University College of New York at Buffalo. He has treated and consulted on conservation treatment of circus posters for the Henry Ford Museum, the Shelburne Museum and the Ringling Circus Museum. He is currently the Director of Field Services as well as Conservator at the Upper Midwest Conservation Association in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The year 1993 marked the 200th anniversary of the first circus performance in America. In Philadelphia in April, 1793, John Bill Ricketts, a British trick rider, brought together equestrians, acrobats, rope dancers, and clowns to present the first circus performance as we know it today. The history of the circus in America is basically recorded in a paper trail, now over two hundred years long.

Probably the most important element in that paper trail is the poster which, incidentally, is a word not found in the vocabulary of the circus. Posters were always referred to as "bills" from the early use of handbills, or later, "lithos," irrespective of whether they were produced by lithography or not. The purpose of this article is to offer insight into the history of the circus poster, including original manufacturing procedures, types

of posters produced, component parts of posters (which are now often altered or lost), and how posters were originally used within the context of the circus itself. All of these factors

Beautiful stone lithograph one-sheet poster shown in raking light originally printed for the Campbell Bros. and Lucky Bill Shows Combined in 1924. The circus only lasted one year and the leftover posters were shelved in hopes of being sold in the future. In 1938, Newton Bros. Circus used the posters by attaching a letterpress printed title of their own name over "Campbell Bros." Both shows were owned by Honest Bill Newton. Author's collection.

may directly affect how a conservator may or should approach the conservation of these artifacts.

In this age of automatic and immediate global information, it is hard to comprehend what Circus Day meant to our parents and grandparents when they were growing up, especially those forebears who were based in an agrarian society formulated around the home and hearth. In an age when travel consisted of going to town, or perhaps the county seat, and when people often were born, raised, lived, worked and died within a few square miles, the circus was more than passing entertainment. It was a traveling world of wonder and marvel. When those brightly colored printed sheets of paper appeared overnight announcing the cavalcade of stupendous features that the Big Show would be bringing for one day only, it is hard to imagine the excitement and anticipation that would be instilled in children of all ages. The key to success for every circus was advertising, and the key to advertising for the first 175 years of the circus in America was the circus poster.

From the beginning, the American circus as an institution was completely self-contained. In fact, circuses operated as their own mobile cities carrying with them all of the equipment and services they needed to exist. The only component of the entire operation which the circus was dependent on outsiders or "towners" for was the printing of posters. While circus advertising was always an in-house production, the printing of posters was always handled by outside companies.



Circuses took on the hardest advertising assignment possible--the hard sell of a product available only on a single day--a much more difficult challenge than selling a product that is available in many markets for a long period of time. The circus had to effectively market itself 150 to 200 times a year to succeed. Circuses faced a 3-way marketing task of having to sell their title, date and feature. A show's title had to guarantee that the circus was a quality enterprise with the highest of standards. Also, name recognition meant repeat customers year after year. The date was of major importance, since potential customers would have to reserve time in their schedules to attend the show. Lastly, the feature was important to promote a worthy product which set the show apart from and hopefully above all the rest. The objective of all circus posters was to get these three points across.

Circus general agents, the ballyhoo artists who strategized marketing campaigns, invented many marketing tools still in use today. General agents were masters of market selection, utilizing every factor of demographics. They invented free coupons, given to farm ladies for instance, as an enticement to bring the whole family. They invented "junk mail," sending out thousands of printed heralds each week to postal customers. Challenged by the notion of "if you've seen one, you've seen them all," general agents developed two key marketing techniques. These included the concept of "bigger and better than ever" and disparaging "brand X" competitors with slogans such as "Wait for the Big Show" or "After the Minnow Comes the Whale." The circus also invented the concept of saturation advertising, often posting in cities with 50 to 100 standard sized billboards, 15,000 to 20,000 poster sheets, or the



A poster used by Sands, Lent & Co. around 1850. Pfening Archives.

equivalent of 626 to 833 standard billboards.

The circus spent more for advertising than any other component of its operation, and for most of show history, the poster was the single most important element. Because of this, show posters constituted one of the principle products of the commercial printing industry through the 19th century.

Show printing was one of the earliest specialties in the commercial

A John H. Murray poster used in 1876. It was printed by Warren, Johnson & Co. Pfening Archives.



printing industry. In 1786, seven years before Astley's Circus, an equestrian by the name of Mr. Poole used bills produced by a printer named Carter. This may have been John Carter, once an apprentice in the print shop of Benjamin Franklin, and later a partner in the firm of Carter & Wilkinson in Providence, Rhode Island. Carter & Wilkinson printed broadsides or bills to advertise the first elephant in the United States in 1797. These were primarily letterpress-printed bills with a graphic depiction from a wood engraving. In 1822, Jonas Booth installed the first steam powered printing press in America, greatly multiplying his production capacity and lowering costs. Booth's printing concern became the first major show printing firm in the United States.

From the very beginning, showmen and, in turn, printers, recognized the notion that "a picture is worth a thousand words," thus illustrations were incorporated very early. These took the form of wood engravings, or in some cases cruder woodcuts. Engravings from mahogany blocks, however, were difficult to make and expensive, so printers used them sparingly and repeatedly. The same images would be used over and over again, often for different shows, originating the concept of "stock" posters which will be explained below. Most early posters were produced in mass, and most shows

would utilize a single design, often with only a printed title. Other information, such as dates and locations would be handwritten by circus advance men, or in some cases, stamped with ink. In the relatively few extant examples from the early 19th century, it is not uncommon to see multiple dates and locations written in varying media, including pencil and iron gall ink, in differing hands, along with stamped information

in various inks, on a single poster. In fact, posters might have been placed in central locations such as popular taverns or blacksmith shops for surrounding performances at different locales. They could then be updated for different performances over a period of time. For this reason, conservators must be extremely careful in making judgments as to originality of such inscriptions.

By the middle 1830's, Richard Hoe, a printing press manufacturer who used Napier's cylindrical principle, was making printing presses capable of printing posters in dimensions of six by eight or nine feet. These were still letterpress-printed posters with wood engraved or woodcut illustrations. Hoe was also one of the earliest printers who was investing in menageries and circuses, realizing the financial gains to be made from developing popular entertainment. In fact, throughout the history of the circus in America, show printers often had financial interests in circuses.

By 1840, Joseph Morse devised a means to replace mahogany with pine blocks, which were much less expensive, easier to obtain, and were more easily carved. He also devised a way to adhere blocks together, allowing for relatively large illustrations. The use of pictorial posters exploded. Morse originally was seeking a method for color printing, and the use of multiple blocks for single ink colors brought about color printing technology, and an early concept for color separation in printing.

In late 18th century Bavaria, Alois Senefelder perfected lithography--a printing process utilizing Bavarian limestone with a complex chemical process to transfer an oil-based or "grease" image onto the stone which would repel water during the printing process. In the most elementary of terms, lithography is based upon the fact that oil and water do not mix. Lithography would revolutionize the 19th century printing industry, and would have a profound effect on the production of circus posters. Senefelder also pioneered color printing utilizing his lithography technique. In a biography and textbook published in 1817, Senefelder stated that one could

print in color using a separate stone for each individual color. He provided recipes for blue and red inks, but noted greens were problematic, he thereby suggested first printing in blue with an overlay of yellow to form green. He anticipated not only multi-colored lithographic prints of years later, but also the process of color separation as we know it today. Senefelder noted in 1817, that lithography had spread to Frankfurt, Paris, Berlin and "even Philadelphia."

Initially, lithography was slow and costly, and show printers were reluctant to use the new technology. There were pioneers, however, including G. and W. Endicott of New York who were producing "lithos" in the 1840's. By the 1860's more shows were requesting lithos, but printers were still reluctant to retire their pine blocks. By 1880, however, lithography had taken over the show printing industry and the Golden Age of the circus poster had begun. Even so, one of the largest show printing firms of today, the Enquirer Printing Company of Cincinnati, produced a series of lithographic posters in the late 19th century, but soon returned to woodblock images with letterpress text, believing that a market for such posters was still profitable. Indeed, they were correct, and continued printing circus posters with woodblock images from 19th century woodblocks as late as the 1970's. Then they converted woodblock images to offset printing methods.

Not surprisingly, since lithography was a Bavarian import, major lithographic printing companies developed in American cities which had

The famous Charles Livingston Bull leaping tiger litho used by Ringling in 1914. Pfening Archives.



large German immigrant populations, such as New York, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Milwaukee and Erie, Pennsylvania. Many show printers originated in the job printing departments of various newspapers including the Buffalo *Courier* which grew into the Courier Printing Company, and the Cincinnati *Enquirer* which grew into the Enquirer Printing Company. In the minds of circus aficionados, however, no printer's work ever surpassed that of Strobridge & Company of Cincinnati.

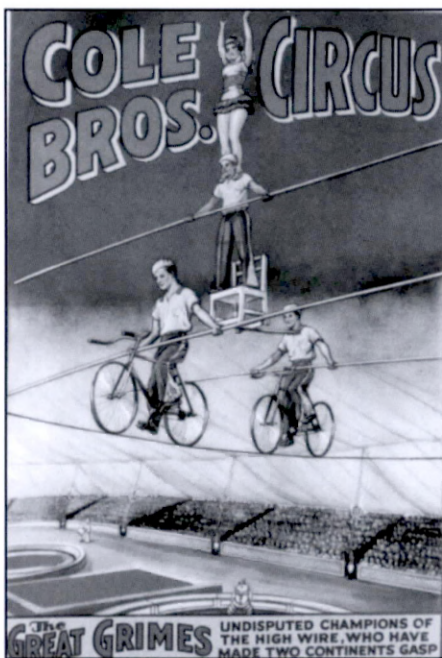
Hines Strobridge joined Middleton, Wallace & Company, a printing firm, in 1854. By 1867, the other partners had departed and the business became Strobridge & Company, printing its first circus posters at about the same time for the Dan Rice Circus. During the 1870's, Strobridge & Company printed posters for a variety of shows, including their first for P. T. Barnum. Strobridge developed a reputation for printing the finest of circus posters. As a show printing firm, one of Strobridge's biggest assets was their commission salesman, A. A. Stewart, who covered the show field, and brought sales up to over 5 million sheets per year to the circus and theater industry. In 1907, Stewart mediated the purchase of the Barnum & Bailey Circus from the estate of James A. Bailey, by the Ringling Brothers. As part of the transaction, he also negotiated a deal whereby Strobridge & Company became the sole poster printer to the new circus conglomerate. By 1930, the Ringling Brothers organization, owned most of the major circuses in the United States, including Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey, Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Sparks, John Robinson, Al G. Barnes, Adam Forepaugh-Sells Brothers, and Buffalo Bill's Wild West.

The actual production of circus posters from idea to finished product was a team effort. Even though most circus poster images are unsigned, they certainly were drawn by some of the most talented artists of the day. In fact, most circus posters were created as production art--much like the "original oil paintings" available at Airport Hotel Sales across the country today. Any number

of artists might work on the overall design of a poster, and printing companies employed large numbers of artists. Oftentimes, specific artists specialized in certain subjects. For example, a single artist might specialize in lettering while another specialized in horses, and a third specialized in performer portraits, etc. In an individual poster many specialized artists would add their components to the single design. The artists became so adept at their craft that designs were often executed directly upon the lithographic stones, making concept drawings unnecessary. Artists often relied heavily on photographs for design details. Photographs of the interiors of printing companies from the turn of the century show poster artists creating their designs from photographic images.

Poster artists were distinguished in other ways as well. The most important artists were the "black" artists who drew the black outlines for the design. Again, in an individual poster, more than one "black" artist might include subjects which were his particular specialty. Second were the color artists, who drew the individual areas for each color which was incorporated into the overall design. Most commonly, multiple colored posters included black inked stones, plus individual stones for each of the primary colors: red, blue and yellow. With only these four colors and the white of the paper support, amazingly detailed and naturalistic colored posters could be mass produced. There are examples of posters which utilized as many as fourteen different ink colors in a single printed design, but these were rare.

Another interesting detail in circus poster design was the common practice of having different artists working on individual stones to be used for the printing of very large posters composed of multiple sheets of paper. In these cases, it was essential that drawing styles between artists were formulaic, as one artist might be drawing the head and shoulders of a star performer, for example, while another drew the chest and torso, and yet another drew the legs and feet. For the most part, posters were identifiable by company only, and not

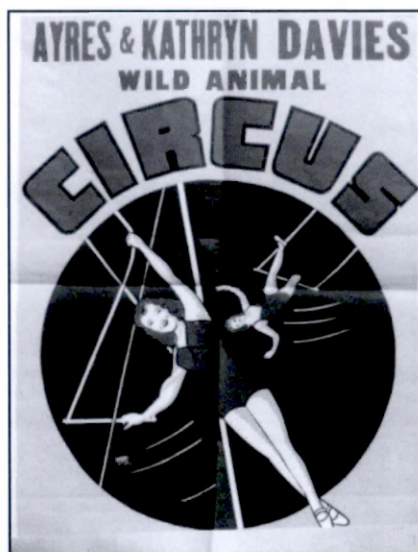


Cole Bros. Circus poster used during the 1943 and 1944 seasons. Although this poster appears to be a specialty poster for "The Great Grimes," there never was such an act. This poster was actually an altered image of one used in 1937 advertising the Gretonas, a famous highwire act. Author's collection.

by individual artist.

Beginning in the early part of the 20th century, individual artists were sometimes contracted to execute entire poster designs. Some of these posters do bear printed signatures or

A typical stock poster with title imprinted at top. Pfening Archives.



identification, and others do not. Probably the greatest image ever produced as a circus poster design was that of a leaping tiger, designed by the noted illustrator Charles Livingston Bull in 1914. This particular image may well be the most recognizable circus image in history, and it is still utilized today, often appearing in set and costume designs in current productions of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Bull's original poster image, however, does not bear his signature. Other noted artists were contracted to design posters throughout the years, including Lawson Wood, another noted illustrator whose humorous depictions of monkeys appeared on *Collier's Magazine* covers during the 1940's. Two of Wood's signed designs for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus first appeared in 1943. Other noted circus poster artists came from the ranks of circus advance departments. These included Maxwell Frederic Coplan whose photographic images appeared in signed posters for Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey, and Roland Butler and Forest Freeland, whose distinctive drawings appeared as poster designs for many circuses from the 1940's through the 1970's.

Circus posters generally may be divided into two categories, either "stock" posters or "specialty" posters. Stock posters were generic designs that each show printer produced that could be used by any circus. Stock subjects included various clowns, wild animals, performers—just about everything which any show might carry. Show printers would print very large runs of individual stock designs and store them. These posters were illustrated in catalogues and a circus owner or general agent could pick out designs and then have the title of his own show printed on them for use. Stock posters also were the most inexpensive to purchase because such large numbers of them were printed. It was not uncommon for more than one circus to use the same poster designs in the same season, the only difference being the show title on the posters. Printed stock posters might remain in storage for years until they were sold to a circus to be used; it is not uncommon to find posters used during a specific year

which had actually been printed decades before. As far as dating posters is concerned, both the date they were printed and the date they were used are extremely important historical information.

Original circus poster concept drawing probably for a quarter-sheet window card, circa 1930's. Note the extensive reworking of the drawing, including reversed positions of the seal and monkey, reduction in the size of the ball, and repositioning of the monkey's tail. In this example, not only the artist, but the printing company is unknown. Author's collection.



While a circus prepared to go on tour, it ordered all of its posters for the upcoming season. Show printers printed the entire year's supply of posters and stored them, shipping them out as the circus called for them. The printers then billed the circus as the posters were used, thus they carried a substantial financial risk should the show fail mid-season.

There was considerable financial risk in traveling circuses, and often shows would fold in mid-season, sometimes only after a few days or weeks after opening. In these instances, show printers might be stuck with a year's worth of posters with a useless title on them. Show printers would retain these posters however, and try to find ways to recoup their investments. For example, a show printer might print new letter press title tags to cover the original title, and offer them for a reduced rate to another circus. In other cases, show printers might simply cut off the old title and attach new title tags, utilizing the salvageable pictorial images. There were also many instances where new circuses were named based upon the leftover stock posters in a show printers warehouse. Examples of all these poster modifications may be found, thus conservators should be aware of the many alterations

which may be original to a circus poster.

Specialty posters were designed for specific acts or features; they were used by individual shows only as long as the act was employed by the show.

Specialty posters often featured very life-like portraits of featured performers or depictions of specific acts. Specialty posters also would include the names of the performers or acts. Before the advent of radio and television personalities, star circus performers were

well-known and popular to the general public. The show that could advertise stars such as the Wallendas, Cristianis, or Zacchini, the Human Cannonball, made sure they had specialty posters to attract ticket buyers. Because of the individuality of specialty posters, they were more expensive than stock posters, but the return at the ticket wagon was well worth the investment. In some cases, specialty poster designs might eventually become stock posters, once the names were removed from the original litho stones. Competing circuses might also have similarly designed stock posters produced based on features

Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus poster from the early 1930's shown in raking light. A date tag has long since been torn off from the bottom, but the severe planar distortions are the result of remaining paper remnants and original flour paste adhesive. Author's collection.



from another show, hoping the general public was not savvy enough to differentiate between the original and the copy. In a few instances, circuses might get stuck with specialty posters which they couldn't use due to unforeseen circumstances. One example was a specialty poster designed for an aerial thrill act called the Man in the Moon, featured with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus in 1939. The performer fell during the opening engagement at Madison Square Garden in New York, thus the remaining posters were destroyed.

There are very few extant concept drawings for circus posters. Concept drawings, however, were sometimes produced, often in conjunction with specialty posters commissioned by individual circuses. For many shows this was a common practice. Often circus owners had very specific ideas regarding the images used to advertise their shows, and some owners completely controlled the artistic content of their posters, often demanding alterations to a poster design to suit their own ideas. Charles Ringling, one of the original Ringling Brothers, had to approve every poster design, and he often demanded more costumed figures be added to indicate that the Ringling Brothers Circus carried a cast of thousands.

While circus posters remain some of the greatest examples of 19th and early 20th century lithography, the question of whether they were works of art or not was a consideration at the turn of the century. Around 1900, a Great Wallace Shows lithograph produced by the Courier Printing Company was copied by the Donaldson Lithography Company. The Courier Company sued the Donaldson Company for copyright violation. A court ruled that copyright was available only for "works of art," and circus posters did not qualify as such, thus the Courier claim was denied. Upon appeal, however, the decision was ultimately overturned by the United States Supreme Court, in whose opinion circus posters were indeed works of art protected by copyright laws.

The dimensions of circus



An interesting use of date sheets used by Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1926.

posters are extremely important historically, and may help in identifying the period of production. Originally, the sizes of random posters were based solely upon the size of the printing press bed, and thus varied greatly. Eventually, however, with lithography virtually taking over the printing industry, a unit of measure called a "sheet" was standardized at 28 by 42 inches. These dimensions were based upon the standard dimensions of a lithography stone that a single man could handle or carry. Circus posters were identified as "sheets" or multiples of sheets. Probably the most common were "one-sheets" measuring 28 by 42 inches, followed by "half-sheets" measuring 28 by 21 inches. "Flats" would have the poster in a horizontal format, while "uprights" would have a vertical orientation. Various multiple sheets were also produced including 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 12, 15, 16, 20, and 24-sheets, with corresponding multiple dimensions. Larger multiples were also produced in rare instances, including 100-sheet posters and larger, first for the W. W. Cole Circus, Forepaugh-Sells Brothers and the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show.

There were also some posters produced that did not adhere to the standard sheet dimensions. "Panels" were designed specifically for use in merchants' windows, to allow advertising without covering too much of the window display. One-sheet panels measured 54 inches long by 21 inches wide

and one-half sheet panels, which were printed both with horizontal designs and vertical designs, measured 14 by 42 inches. "Streamers" were also printed, which had the show title one sheet high by from 2 to 28-sheets wide. These were used across the top of large pictorial posters.

For every pictorial poster show printers produced, they also printed numerous "date sheets." Date sheets included the show title, the town, the show date, and sometimes generic advertising text, such as "One Day Only," "Wait for the Big Show," etc. These posters were printed by letter, usually in one color, either red or

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey poster first printed by Strobridge & Co. in 1925. The date tag identifies this poster as being used for a stand in Salem, Oregon on Saturday, August 27, 1927. Author's collection.



blue, or more rarely in two colors, usually red and blue, with overlapping areas appearing deep violet or black for a third color. Date sheets were printed in standard sheet sizes, along with smaller "date tags" (known also as "date strips" or "date tails") which would be pasted along the bottoms of pictorial one and half-sheet posters by the circus' advance billing crews.

Many pictorial posters which have survived have had date tags torn off them. It is common to find paper and adhesive residues along the bottoms of posters where date tags once existed. It cannot be overemphasized how important date tags are to the historical value of circus posters. They can be key evidence in identifying the year a poster was used, as most shows kept careful records of routes and tours which are still available for research today. A date tag on a poster which reads, "Tucson/Friday/June 5" may be traced with the show title to a route which dates the poster precisely to 1959. As mentioned before, large numbers of posters might be printed and stored, and might remain shelved until use several decades later. Historically, the date of use is just as important as the date of printing, and it is unfortunate that so much historical information has been lost or destroyed by the reckless removal of date tags.

A set of date sheets and tags were good for only one day and town; show printers could not make mistakes.

Since circuses moved everyday, the logistics of shipping posters to circus advance crews was a complicated challenge. There was no room for error. Also, because circuses jealously guarded their routes from each other, show printers had to remain confidential neutral parties when dealing with individual clients.

In 1912, the advertising industry standardized billboards as 24-sheets with 12 by 25 foot frames. These dimensions allowed for a white border around the image, and this became the industry standard.

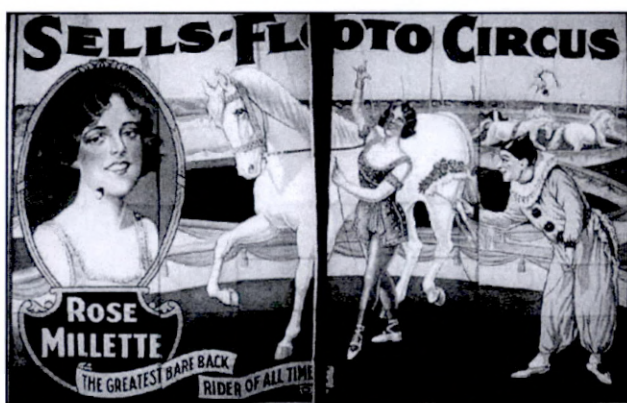
More recently, the border has been eliminated in billboard ads

which now use 30 sheets as a standard.

Show printers utilized some very specific practices when producing multiple sheet posters. Large multiple sheet posters were not supplied to the circus advance department in individual sheets, as this was completely impractical. Instead, poster sections were supplied in 4-sheet increments which were pasted together in a specific department of the show printing firm. Of interest to conservators is the fact that the adhesive of choice was flour paste, a type of wheat starch paste. When the four individual sheets were pasted together and allowed to dry, they were then carefully folded for storage in such a way that they could be unfolded by the circus billers and posted in a consistent method. All folding was standardized within individual printing companies. The circus billers were under extreme time pressure, and could not unfold each section to check orientation, etc. Each poster was therefore marked with an ink stamp on the reverse to identify the poster image, the section of the poster in the overall image, and as an indication of which corner of the poster would be first adhered during the posting process.

Since all circus posters were folded for storage and shipment, from individual one-sheets to sections of large multiple sheets, all circus posters have inherent creases in them. These creases are very important historically, and since folding orientation between show printers might vary, the manner in which a poster is folded could possibly be used to identify the printer or the period in which the poster was produced. For these reasons, conservators must exercise restraint when flattening posters, for important information may easily be lost or altered. Also, there are usually ink losses along crease lines which often times are inpainted for aesthetic reasons during conservation treatment. Once again, this degree of compensation may easily mask important historic evidence, and when possible, it is best to avoid such compensation extremes.

Even though circus posters were



This 16-sheet Sells-Floto specialty poster advertising Rose Millette in 1930, originally designed for another star, May Wirth, with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus in the 1920's. Note that the poster is in four vertical 4-sheet sections, which is how it would have originally been sent from the printer. This poster was never used, perhaps because of the unprinted tear in the jawline of the portrait, or more likely, because a billposter decided to "charley" it. Author's collection.

produced by the thousands very cheaply, the materials utilized in their production were of higher quality than one might expect. Posters were printed on fairly high quality medium weight wove paper, usually bleached to a bright white color.

This Robbins Bros. window card was used in 1938. Pfening Archives.



While some wood pulp generally can be identified in standard poster paper, these paper substrates age quite well with proper storage and handling. Because of the volume of posters produced, and the fact that they were not meant to last beyond the few weeks they were used, it is interesting to note that a fairly high quality paper was the industry standard. There were two

exceptions to this use of fairly high quality paper. The first was date tags which often were printed on poorer quality paper.

Date tags often age far differently from pictorial posters, often because the paper substrate contains high concentrations of wood pulp. The second exception was found in multiple layer substrates which were used for "window cards," and small shaped stand-up posters for use on counter-tops, etc. Window cards were posters, usually in quarter-sheet dimensions or less often in odd-sized dimensions between a quarter and half-sheet size. These posters consisted of the pictorial image printed on the facing sheet of a multiple layer substrate. These substrates consisted of a facing sheet of a bleached white wove paper with a heavier cardboard backing, much like the substrates of today's cereal boxes. These cardboard supports may be problematic, often causing eventual discoloration of the printed facing sheet, however, this original structure is most important to maintain. In conservation practice, window cards should never have the facing sheets removed from the cardboard substrate. Such a treatment would completely compromise the artifact. Instead, proper storage of window cards and stand-ups in a controlled environment will do much to prolong the lives of these posters.

There is a great need for research into the various inks utilized in lithographic printing of circus posters. For the most part, inks used for printing circus posters were oil-based inks. Because posters were often hung out of doors, water soluble inks were not practical, and so were avoided. However, from treatment

experience, I have encountered various inks that are soluble to some degree in water. One example is brown sepia-toned inks, often found in photographic images, which were commonly used from the early 1900's through the 1940's. In some cases these inks contain water soluble color components. During the washing of a poster from the mid-1920's depicting May and Phil Wirth (a famous bareback riding team) in a lithographed photographic image printed in a sepia-toned ink, an orange component in the ink was solubilized in the wash water. This occurred even though careful solubility tests had been performed prior to immersion. Conservators must approach these types of images with extreme caution. Another example of water soluble inks are brilliant red inks used around the turn of the century. In another treatment of a Ringling Bros. poster from circa 1904 careful solubility testing of inks before aqueous immersion was carried out with no sign of solubility. Washing of the poster also proceeded with no signs of solubility. The poster, after washing, was dried between spun polyester webbing and blotter paper under glass and weights. After drying, and upon removal from the polyester and blotter papers, there was a red stain in the polyester corresponding directly to the red inked areas of the image. Even though the stain was slight, it was clearly visible on the polyester, yet there was no visual change in the poster itself, and absolutely no evidence of bleeding of the red ink in the poster. Conservators must approach aqueous immersion treatments with caution.

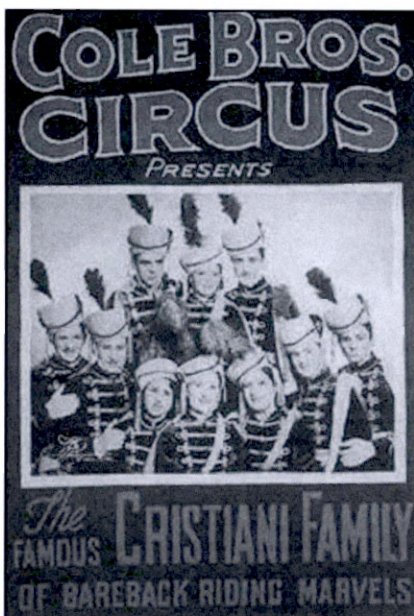
The ways in which posters were used by the circus are unique in the history of advertising. In any circus, the coordination of all advertising was the responsibility of the general agent. Before the start of a circus tour, the general agent would draw up generalized lists of posters for use on a typical day. These lists would specify the sizes and quantities of each poster, plus date sheets and date tags. Lists would be drawn up based upon the size of a city or town, the radius of the surrounding area to be posted, and special circumstances, such as the need for extra posters in

case a competing show was billing the same area. During the course of a circus season, the general agent would order lists of posters every other week or so to fulfill the advertising needs of the show.

In the earliest days of the circus, the general agent himself might go out ahead of the show to handle the advertising, including the posting of bills and posters. Later, more personnel were required, and a show might have a separate horse drawn wagon to carry a crew of people. By the time the circus turned to railroad transportation, a separate railroad car would go out ahead of the show as part of commercial train loads. Larger shows would use two, three or four advertising cars, usually arriving in towns a month, two weeks and one week before the show to carry out the saturation advertising. These, in the vocabulary of the circus, were "advance cars" or "bill cars" and any advertising personnel or promotion were known simply as the "advance."

The advance crew who worked with posters were divided into two distinct groups. The "billposters" were the individuals who actually pasted posters on the out sides of buildings, fences, etc., while the "lithographers" placed posters in windows, preferably store windows in downtown locations. Each one was given a stack of posters in the morning, called a "hod," along with specific routes to follow during the day. Billposters would primarily use large multiple sheet posters, while lithographers used mostly one-sheets, half-sheets, and panels. A crew had only one day in a town and surrounding area in which to hang their posters.

The advance carried one individual who was the designated paste maker. Again, flour paste, a type of wheat starch paste, was the adhesive of choice. It was prepared in the early morning using flour, water and blue vitriol (copper sulfate) as a pesticide. The ingredients were blended together and then were "blasted" with steam to make a paste of creamy consistency. Railroad advance cars had built-in boilers to provide the steam, otherwise the paste maker would have to find a dairy or laundry where he could get steam.



This 1946 Cole Bros. Circus poster featuring a brown sepia-toned group portrait of the Cristian Family, one of the greatest circus acts of all time. Brown sepia-toned inks used in circus posters often contain water soluble dye components which conservators should be wary of when considering aqueous treatments. This is a rare complete version of this poster. Author's collection.

While the paste was prepared, the billposters gathered their hods and equipment including long handled paste brushes, buckets and ladders. The lithographers, meanwhile, would lay out stacks of posters and then form a line to pick posters one at a time off of the stacks. This was known as "circusing the posters," or mixing up the images, so that only a single roll of posters had to be carried, and each poster as it was pulled off the roll would be different. This saved valuable time, especially if a merchant was willing to have more than one poster placed in his window, or an empty store front was located. The lithographers then had to paste the date tags to each of the posters in their hod. Since it was left up to the individual, date tags could be applied pretty much in any condition, although most lithographers took a great deal of pride in their workmanship. Sometimes wrinkling or creasing would occur but this was ignored, since time was of the essence and the posters only had to get their message

across for a few weeks at most.

During a day's work a single billposter could hang from 300 to 600 sheets covering up to 7,000 square feet of space. A few billposters gained the reputation of "thousand sheeters," those who were skilled and fast enough to post 1,000 sheets in one day. Billposters termed any stand of posters put up with paste, a "daub," whether it was a single sheet or the entire side of a building. The procedure for posting bills was pretty standardized amongst billposters. When George Gallo, a billposter with Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey, King Bros. Circus, and Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros., was once asked by Charles Philip Fox and Tom Parkinson, authors of *Billers, Banners and Bombast: The Story of Circus Advertising*, if there was a trick to posting sheets that would not peel off, his answer was straight to the point.

"We would daub the hell out of it. It meant we would rub our paste into the wall first. Then put up the paper, again rubbing it in hard. Finally we would take clear water and splash it over the paper, rubbing it hard with our brushes. That damn stand won't peel or flag for sure. Trouble is we didn't always have the time to do this, or sometimes we couldn't spare the water. But today (1974) most billposters use Bloety's Paste Flour made in England. It is great stuff only you have to let it sit for two hours before you use it. And it doesn't take steam to cook it. Just add the dry powder to water and stir."

Roy Long, boss billposter for Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey, related a variation on the standard practice and the materials used, again in the Fox and Parkinson text.

"As car manager for Ringling, Babe Boudinot, loved those country routes and wanted us to put up plenty of sheets. He was forever telling the men not to just frame the paper. 'Iron it, iron it, rub it in, rub it in.' He was telling them to paste the entire space, not just around the edge of a six-sheet with an X of paste in the middle; this was framing the poster. It was faster but the paper would not last as long as if you ironed it on.

"If we were having a good day and



This 1960 Beatty-Cole window display shows the use of stickers.

getting lots of good daubs we sometimes ran out of paste. There wasn't time to go back to the car so we bought flour, added water and stirred up our own mixture. We had to add lye, which would cook the mixture so it was usable. But we had to be very careful not to rub this paste too hard on the surface of the poster as it would make the inks run."

There was an unwritten code that billposters would get permission before hanging their posters, and they were always armed with plenty of free show tickets to persuade property owners. Of course, if a property owner could not be contacted for a desirable location, a daub might still appear. These were called "strong arm" stands. Billposters were held accountable for all of their sheets, and most were required to file daily detailed reports with locations of where their posters had been placed. Any billposter who might "charley" some posters, or ditch them, would not remain employed very long.

Lithographers utilized a completely different hanging method for installing their posters. They actually used paper hinges with water soluble glue or gum adhesives, called "stickers," similar to postage stamps. Show printers supplied stickers with poster orders, and many even printed special stickers with the show title or decoration on them. These stickers may be used for identification purposes, thus they contain important historical information which must be preserved during conservation treatments. A good example from my own collection is a Shrine Circus poster from the 1940's. The Shrine Circus is a generic title used by Shrine tem-

ples for their sponsored circuses over the past 80 years. In such examples, identification of the actual circus involved can be difficult. Stickers on the poster, however, have the Sparks Circus title, identifying it as one used by a Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows, Inc. sponsored indoor circus of the late 1940's.

A lithographer would attach stickers at the top reverse of the poster with the upper adhesive side facing the window into which the poster was to be attached. With the adhesive already moistened, the lithographer would manipulate the poster into position in the window using two 6 foot long sticks. Once placed, the sticks were then used to rub the stickers insuring good adhesion to the glass pane. In their book, *Billers, Banners and Bombast: The Story of Circus Advertising*, Fox and Parkinson quote Sid Foote, who joined Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus in 1953 as a lithographer. He explains the procedure he learned.

"An old-timer named Eddie Jackson taught me the ropes. He explained the importance of getting grime, oil film, or dust off glass where you will rub in your stickers; otherwise they just won't hold. Get the stickers on the poster square. Two for a half-sheet, and three for a one-sheet. Hang the posters square with the window frame so from the outside they look neat. Eddie said he never put the stickers on the posters until the store owner said it was okay to hang. If you had stickers on posters ahead of time and got caught in the rain, you would have a mess."

Lithographers also had to keep detailed records of the posters they used, and this was maintained in the process of getting permission to hang them. All shows had brief printed lithograph contracts, usually about the size of a large ticket. The lithographers had to get shop owners to sign the simple agreement that they would keep the posters up until circus day. In exchange, the owner would get free circus tickets. If the posters were not up on circus day when an inspector from the show stopped by, the owner relinquished his right to free tickets. Of course,

every circus was shrewdly aware that only about half of the free tickets would ever be claimed.

By the 1950's, billposters and lithographers became unionized, and any poster put up received a Billposter's Union Stamp. Of course, these markings are historically important and must be preserved during conservation treatments.

With the advent of modern media, especially radio and television, the use of circus posters began to decline. By the 1940's, with the development of off-set lithography and other photo mechanical reproduction processes, circus posters lost some of their remarkable artistic quality. Eventually, classic stone lithographic poster images were photographed to be mechanically reproduced. In the mid-1970's, Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey adopted a policy of using only a single poster design for each edition of their circus, often incorporating a variety of featured acts or attractions in the design. The poster designs also incorporated large blank spaces allowing for localized information to be printed in as needed, thus eliminating the need for date tags and date sheets. By the late 1970's, few circuses even used posters, and many shows opted to use window cards only, which could be placed indoors or simply be stapled to telephone poles outside.

Luckily for those who still appreciate the circus poster as a unique example of American graphic art, there has been a resurgence in the use of posters by the American circus. Today, one of the largest circus poster printing firms is Graphics 2000, located in Las Vegas, Nevada. Using the most modern of off-set printing techniques incorporating computer generated graphics, outstanding photography, as well as traditional images, this company pro-

BILLS AND PRINTING			
SHIPPED TO			
RINGLING BROS. WORLD'S GREATEST SHOW			
To JERRY DIEHL, Mgr. Car No. 3.			
Boxes			
Via E. R.			
From THE STROBRIDGE LITHOGRAPHING CO.			
Cincinnati, 1910.			
No. of sheets	NAME OF BILLS	Car No. of Bill	Total
32	Street Parade No. 43	3	
32	General Animals " 44	3	
32	Schuman's Horses " 45	3	
28	Portraits and Title " 52	3	
24	Seas " 61	3	
20	Lorch Family " 71	3	
20	Elephants " 74	3	
16	Portraits (1908) " "	2	
16	Schuman's Horses " 85	3	
16	Biders " 87	3	
12	Clowns " 97	3	
12	Club Jugglers " 98	3	
12	Comedies " 99	3	
8	Robbedillo " 111	3	
8	Outsell Powells " 112	3	
6	Rhino and Hippo " 126	3	
3	Portraits " 80	3	
3	Giraffes " 131	3	
1	Portraits " 1	6	
1	Giraffes " 8	6	
1	Street Parade " 100	-	

duces some of the most beautiful posters available today, and boasts many of this country's largest circuses as its clients.

A 1910 Strobridge-Ringling Bros. litho shipping list. Pfening Archives.

The history of the American circus poster is as unique and colorful as the attractions they have represented over the past two hundred years. With a better understanding of this history, including manufacturing procedures, poster

components, and how posters were originally used, conservators can design and carry out treatments that insure the longevity of existing circus posters while maintaining their valuable historic and artistic integrity.

List of Works Consulted

- American Heritage Magazine. Great Days of the Circus.* New York: American Heritage Publishing, 1962.
- Chindahl, George L. *A History of the Circus in America.* Caldwell, ID: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1959.
- Culhane, John. *The American Circus.* New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1990.
- Durant, John, and Alice Durant. *Pictorial History of the American Circus.* Cranbury, NJ: A. S. Barnes and Co., Inc., 1957.
- Fox, Charles Philip, ed. *American Circus Posters in Full Color.* New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1978.
- Fox, Charles Philip, and Tom Parkinson. *Billers, Banners and Bombast: The Story of Circus Advertising.* Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Co., 1985.
- Fox, Charles Philip, and Tom Parkinson. *The Circus in America.* Waukesha, WI: Country Beautiful, 1969.
- Haenlein, Carl-Albrecht, and Wolfgang Till, editors. *Menschen,*

Tiere, Sensationen: Zirkusplakate 1880-1930 (Humans, Animals, Sensations: Circus Posters 1880-1930). Hannover, Germany: Kestner-Gesellschaft, 1978.

Hoh, La Vahn G., and William H. Rough. *Step Right Up! The Adventure of Circus in America.* Whitehall, VA: Betterway Publications, Inc., 1990.

Homenaje Al Circo (Homage to the Circus). Madrid, Spain: Banco de Bilbao, 1986.

Horsman, Paul. Private Correspondence. Mr. Horsman, a noted circus historian, once owned a private circus museum and currently is a circus memorabilia dealer.

Hubler, Richard. *The Cristianis.* Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966.

Kelley, F. Beverly. *It Was Better Than Work.* Gerald, MO: The Patrice Press, 1982.

Kirk, Rhina. *Circus Heroes and Heroines.* Maplewood, NJ: Hammond, Inc., 1972.

Markschiess-van Trix, J., and Bernhard Nowak, (translated from the German by Charles Dukes). *Circus People and Posters.* German Democratic Republic: Edition Leipzig, 1977.

Ogden, Tom. *Two Hundred Years of the American Circus.* New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1993.

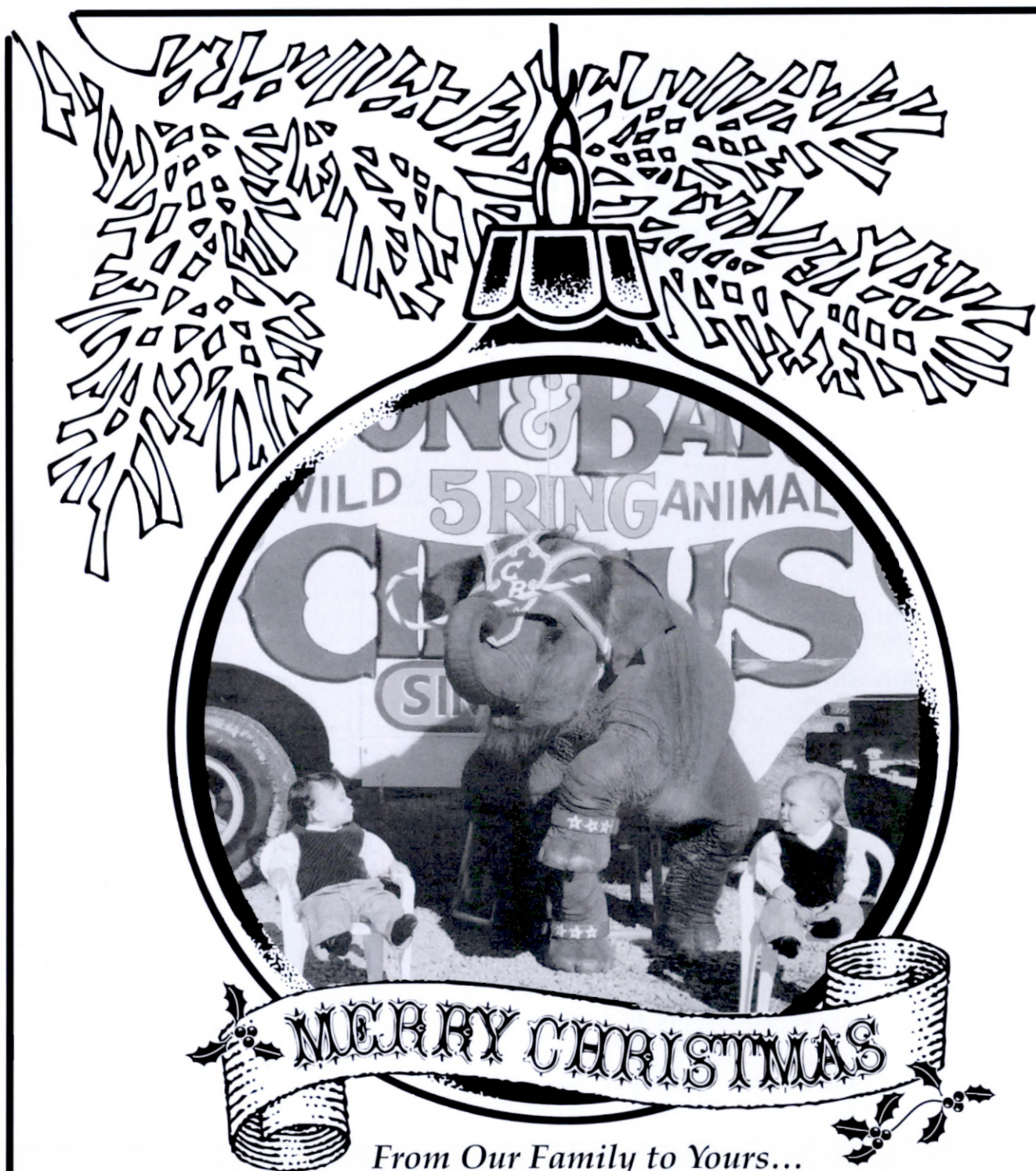
Plowden, Gene. *Circus Press Agent: The Life and Times of Roland Butler.* Caldwell, ID: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1984.

Rennert, Jack. *100 Years of Circus Posters.* New York: Darien House, Inc., 1974.

Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, Daily Program and Magazine, Season of 1928. Tegge.

Timothy Noel. Private Correspondence. Mr. Tegge is a professional circus performer and circus historian, and maintains one of the largest private collections of circus posters in the U.S.

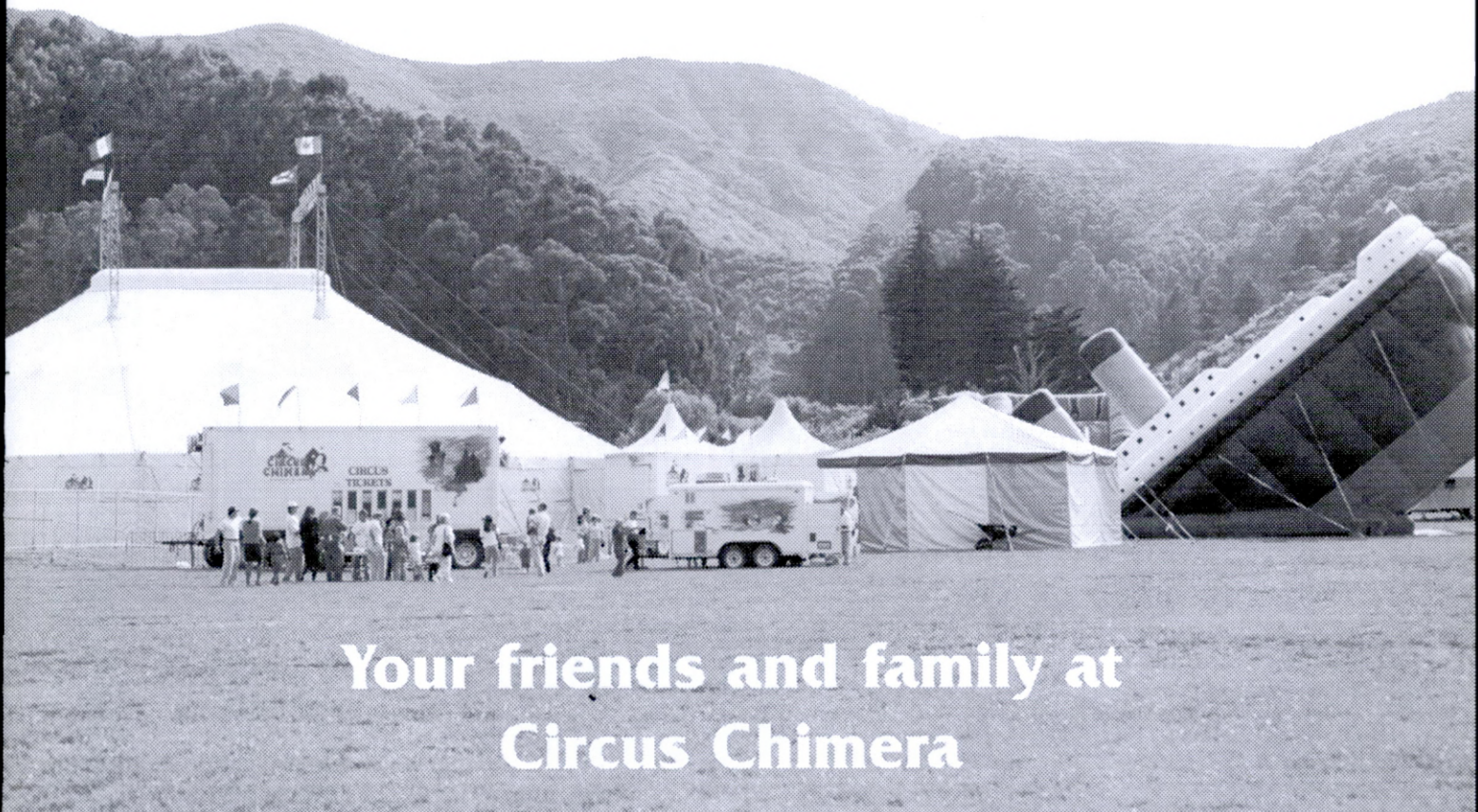
Acknowledgement is made to Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows, Inc., for permission to reproduce circus posters which are copyright material owned by them. Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey™ and The Greatest Show on Earth™ are registered trademarks of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows, Inc.



From Our Family to Yours...
***Happy Holidays and Best Wishes
for Every Day of the New Year!***

*Bryce, Brandon, Jennie,
And The Entire Carson & Barnes Circus Family*

**The family of circus is one family.
The family of man is one family.
In this time of strife,
remember to cherish your family.
Count your blessings this Holiday Season.
They are many.**



**Your friends and family at
Circus Chimera**

BIG APPLE CIRCUS



**SEASONS
GREETINGS!**



DREAMS OF A CITY

2002-2003 TOUR ROUTE

Washington, DC	Sept - Oct 2002	Queens, NY	May 2003
New York, NY	Oct 2002 - Jan 2003	Brookville, NY	May - Jun 2003
Atlanta, GA	Feb - Mar 2003	West Nyack, NY	Jun 2003
Bridgewater, NJ	Mar 2003	Charlestown, RI	Jul 2003
Boston, MA	Apr - May 2003	Hanover, NH	Jul 2003

All dates and locations subject to change

BIGAPPLECIRCUS.ORG

TOM MIX

His Life, His Films and His Circus

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

In 1880 a son was born to a humble family in Cameron County in North Central Pennsylvania. Little did any one know that the boy would become the King of the Cowboys and a featured circus performer.

Thomas Hezekiah Mix was born on January 6, 1880 in the small cross-roads of Mix Run, the son of lumberman Edwin Mix and his wife Elizabeth. It is said that at age ten young Mix set his sights on cowboys and the West after seeing the Buffalo Bill Wild West show.

He dropped out of school after the 4th grade in 1890, not very interested in an education. By then the family had moved to near by Driftwood and then DeBoise. Mix changed his middle name to Edward.

Hearing of the Spanish-American War Mix, at age 18, joined the U. S. Army in 1898 thinking he would see action. As a member of the Field Artillery he never left the United States. But he adapted to Army life and was promoted to sergeant in 1899. He received an honorable discharge as a first sergeant on April 26, 1901 and reenlisted immediately. However when he was not sent to take part in the Philippine Insurrection he became discussed in the army and while on furlough after November 4, 1902 he did not return and was listed as AWOL. The army never came after him.

Tom Mix in the U.S. Army at age 20. Oklahoma State Historical Society.



Mix's first wife was Grace Allen, who he married in 1902.

As drum major of the Oklahoma Cavalry band in 1904 he went to the St. Louis Worlds Fair, where he met Col. Zack Mulhall who had a wild west show. He may have been in the show, but in any case his dream of being a cowboy on a wild west show was whetted.

In 1905 he married Kitty Jewell Perrine. He was appointed as a Texas Ranger on September 22, 1905.

Mix went to work for the 101 Ranch in Bliss, Oklahoma in 1905, receiving \$15 a month. While on the ranch he polished his trick riding and roping. In 1906 Mix was in charge of ring stock on the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West show. Mix historian

Bud Norris says Mix was on the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West show again in 1907. By then he had married and divorced twice. In 1908 he joined with Buffalo Vernon on an little known show titled Cheyenne Bill's Wild West.

In 1909 he married Olive Stokes and was with Tom Wiedemann's Kit Carson's Buffalo Ranch Wild West. That same year Mix joined Will Dickey's Circle D. Wild West show. Dickey was connected to the Selig-Polyscope Film Co, Through



Tom Mix "King of the Cowboys." All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.

Dickey Mix went to work there providing and handle horses. In due time he was given bit parts in Selig westerns. But the work was not steady. Between films he found other wild west and rodeo work. In 1912 he appeared in a rodeo for Canadian rodeo promoter Guy Wedick in Calgary. Before returning to Selig he spent some time with Vernon Seaver's Young Buffalo Wild West show.

William N. Selig, a former medicine showman, was one of early motion picture pioneers. Headquartered in Chicago he made his first films in the early 1900s. He moved his headquarters to the Los Angeles, California in 1907.

Mix's first film was Selig's *Ranch Life in the Great Southwest*, in 1909. It was a one reeler lasting fifteen minutes. In 1915 Mix was credited as



Mix performing a stunt in a 1923 film.

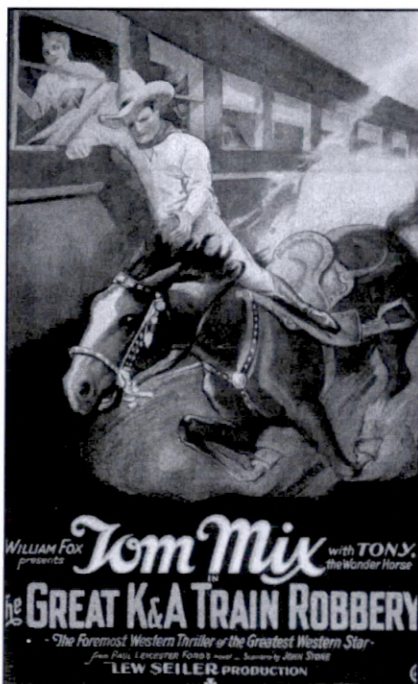
producer and director of the film *Harold's Bad Luck*. Mix's last of 236 pictures for Selig was *The Heart of Texas Ryan* in 1917. One Hundred and thirty-one of his Selig films were westerns.

Mix's daughter Ruth Jane was born on July 13, 1912 in Dewey, Oklahoma.

In 1913 Mix settled in Prescott, Arizona and that was his home until 1917.

Mix moved to the big time when the William Fox Film Corporation

Lobby poster for a 1926 Fox film. Chuck Anderson collection.



signed him in 1917. At the time Fox was in a shaky financial condition. The success of the Mix pictures made Fox and Mix very rich.

In 1918 Mix married Victoria Forde.

In a few years Mix was the biggest star on the Fox lot, being paid \$17,500 a week. Mix's first Fox film was *Hearts and Saddles*, released on March 11, 1917. It was two reels lasting thirty minutes.

As Mix's popularity zoomed a special area of the studio was designated as the Tom Mix Rancho, generally known as Mixville.

Tom Mix made 85 films for Fox, the last one was *Painted Post* released on June 1, 1928,

As a silent super star Mix was on a par with Lon Chaney, Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, Gloria Swanson and Rudolph Valentino. His peak was in 1925 and riding high he built a mansion in Beverly Hills.

European agents booked Mix in Europe in 1925 playing large venues in England, France, Holland and Germany.

By 1928 Hollywood was changing and sound films had arrived. After eleven years Mix and William Fox had conflicting views about budgets and salary and he left that studio.

In the period from 1926 to 1928 Tom Mix was by far the King of the Cowboys as the most popular western star.

After leaving Fox Mix contracted with FBO (Film Box Office) studios owned by Joseph Kennedy, Sr. in 1928. Kennedy at the time had under contract Buzz Barton, Bob Steele and Tom Tyler, none of whom were of Mix's stature. Mix received \$15,000 a week at FBO.

Mix made five films for FBO. The first was *Son of the Golden West*, a six reeler lasting 90 minutes. It was released on October 1, 1928. The last was *The Big Diamond Robbery*, released on March 14, 1929.

In 1929 with sound pictures being introduced a number of silent stars did not make the transition. Mix found himself without a studio contract. He also lost around a million dollars in the stock market crash and was forced to liquidate his home and other holdings. In 1930 he settled with the IRS and paid \$175,000 in back taxes.



Newspaper ad for a 1923 Fox film.

In his 1991 book Richard F. Seiverling wrote about horses used by Mix during his movie career: "In a career spanning 25 years in the movies Tom Mix rode four magnificent horses, Old Blue, Tony Sr. (Old Tony), Tony Jr, and Tony II." After retiring Old Blue in 1914 Mix bought Tony Sr., called the Wonder Horse. In 1932 Mix retired Tony Sr. Seiverling said Mix then bought Tony Jr. who appeared in the 1935 Mascot serial and with the Tom Mix circus. His final horse was Tony II who was with the circus in 1938 and on Mix's final European tour that year.

Lobby poster for a 1928 FBO film.



Mix returned to the sawdust trail in early 1929 and made a handshake verbal agreement with Zack Miller to appear with the 101 Ranch Wild West show. However he was offered a more lucrative contract with the Sells-Floto show and blew the Miller contract. He joined the Floto show when it went under canvas in 1929, receiving \$10,000 a week. The Millers filed a breach of



contract suit for \$342,000 against him. Winding its way through the court system it was heard in Erie, Pennsylvania in January 1931. Ringling attorney John M. Kelley defended Mix.

The *Erie Daily Times* published extensive coverage on the trial. The January 19 issue reported: "Two colorful figures of the old west met in Erie county court Monday, the principals in a breach of contract suit. Friends for the past 25 years, Tom Mix, movie star, and Zack T. Miller, head of the Western Shows Co., were prepared to battle over an enormous sum of money, claimed by the latter as damages.

"The court room was as a circus lot. All eyes were on the screen hero. The court procedure was somber and uninteresting to the multitude of admirers. During the trial Kelley repeatedly leveled his sarcastic remarks at the ex-wife of Mix, who took the stand in favor of the circus owner."

The *Times* of January 24 reported: "Three of the witnesses on whom Tom Mix is depending to win the lawsuit involving himself and Col. Zack T. Miller testified Monday afternoon as the trial took on new impetus and finished the handful of spectators with a 'good show.'

"Johnny Agee, self-admitted guardian of ballet girls morals, horse trainer, ringmaster, movie actor and Australian whip-cracker, modestly told the court and jury this morning that Mix was virtually a 'ham and egger' when it came to circus performing.

"You've got to do more than ride around an arena on a horse and wave

Mix in the Sell-Floto Peru, Indiana winter quarters just before the opening of the 1931 season.

your hat to draw crowds,' he said. "What could Mix do when he joined the Sells-Floto circus in 1929?" Attorney John Kelley asked.

"He couldn't do anything,' the witness answered."

Charles H. English conducted the cross-examination, which started a short time before the lunch adjournment.

"Now,' said English, 'laying aside all your characteristic modesty, you're really a better performer than

Lobby poster for the 1935 Mascot serial. Circus World Museum collection.



Mix, aren't you.'

"I certainly am,' responded the witness.

"And what,' continued the attorney, 'were you paid?

"\$300 a week.'

"And what did Mix get for his services with the circus?"

"It was \$10,000 a week."

Attorney Kelley's strategy was to prove that Mix was not worth the amount Zack Miller sued for. Of

course Agee's testimony was a set up, and did not really represent his feelings about Mix.

The Miller's won the suit and were granted a settlement of \$66,000, far less than they had asked for.

The Mix after show (concert) on Sells-Floto in 1929 consisted of seven displays: No. 1 The introduction of Tom Mix, Tony, and the entire company.

No. 2 Tom Mix and Tony.

No. 3 The Pony Express.

No. 4 Tom Mix and his company of expert ropers, Hank Durnell, Frank Gusky and Colorado Cotton.

No. 5 Tom Mix presenting the Crewery Equines.

No. 6 Trick and fancy riding.

No. 7 Tom Mix and company riding man killing outlaw horses.

Mix continued with Sells-Floto in 1930 and 1931. He was provided with a private railroad car each year.

Universal Pictures wanted to again produce westerns in the early 1930s. They looked at Tom Mix, who had never made a talking picture and in fact had not made a film in three years.

Universal Pictures signed Mix, at age 51, in 1931. Carl Laemmle and his son were seeking a big cowboy name and were willing to invest a budget of \$100,000 to \$150,000 per film. Mix was given cast approval.

Mix was to start his first picture in his first talking role in October 1931. On November 23 the picture was halted when Mix became seriously ill with peritonitis. By April 1932 Mix recovered and returned to work.

His first Universal film was *Destry Rides Again*, with a budget of around



\$108,300 was released on April 4, 1932. Mix made nine films for Universal; the last was *Rustler's Roundup*, released on February 23, 1933.

In 1932 he married for the last time to aerialist Mable Ward, who he had met on the Sells-Floto Circus.

Following his Universal films Mix announced his retirement from motion pictures.

Mix toured vaudeville theaters in 1933 with The Tom Mix Roundup. The show consisted on Mix and Tony, two liberty horses and the Ward sister's aerial act.

In a lucrative five year deal Mix contracted in 1933 with the Ralston Purina Company to use his name on a radio show. The *Tom Mix Straight Shooters* debuted on September 25, 1933 from New York City with Percy Hemus as "The Old Wrangler." The Ralston box tops provided premiums of all kinds. The radio show continued until June of 1950.

The Mix advance advertising semi-trailer in 1936.

The Tom Mix Circus in Pasadena, California on March 17, 1936. The side show tent at right shows the 120 x 20 foot pit show style tent.

While Mix was with the Floto show in 1930 another motorized circus was organized by Sam B. Dill, a former manager of the John Robinson Circus. The show was first titled Gentry Bros. It later was called Robbins due to concerns from Henry Gentry who was touring a small dog and pony show called the Original Gentry Bros. Circus. The final title was the Sam B. Dill Circus.

Mix returned to the sawdust trail in 1934 by buying half interest in the Dill circus. The show was titled the Sam B. Dill Circus and Tom Mix Wild West Combined. Dill became seriously ill and before the end of the season Mix purchased Dill's interest. Mix historians say he invested \$400,000 in the Dill show that included total ownership. Sam Dill died of lung cancer in February 1935. During the 1934 season Dail Turney was assistant manager under Dill. Turney had

been with Mix since 1921 as his chauffeur and secretary. Turney was a quick study and managed the circus from 1935 to 1938.

Mix dropped the Dill name and shortened the title to the Tom Mix Circus. This title was used until the show closed in 1938. The show continued parading in 1934 and 1935.

In 1934 the show opened using a 120 foot big top with three 40s. It was later replaced by a new 130 foot top with three 50s. The menagerie top was a 90 with three 30s. A blow down in Jacksonville, Illinois on July 10 destroyed the menagerie tent. The Mix show day and dated the new Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus in Sandusky, Ohio on August 6. Both shows paraded, but on different streets. Twenty-four new Ford trucks were received in Davenport, Iowa on July 15, replacing most of the GMC ones, new in 1930. The show closed the season and went into winter quarters in Compton, California.

Under the ownership of the Roundup Amusement Co. the 1935 season opened in Compton on March 6. It played 216 stands in 19 states and traveled 13,271 miles. Nine new Ford and four new International trucks replaced the last of the 1930 GMCs.

The side show was leased out to Ted Metz, who had a complete stand alone setup. He used a carnival style pit show arrangement, with a long narrow tent.

Feeling another picture would produce publicity for his circus he

The Mix cookhouse kitchen trailer in 1936.





Inside the 150 foot Mix big top in 1936.

signed with Nat Levine's Mascot Pictures, a "Poverty Row" studio, in 1935. It was a far cry from Fox and Universal.

Mix made a deal for four week's work at \$10,000 a week. *The Miracle Rider* was a fifteen chapter serial, produced in four weeks. The budget was \$80,000, half going to Mix. It was the only fifteen-chapter serial made by Mascot and it was the studio's highest-grossing serial.

During his career Mix made a total of 336 films. Some of these are available on video.

The 1936 season was significant because of the transcontinental tour and the playing indoors at the Chicago Coliseum. The show was enlarged. Considerable money spent in sprucing up the appearance on the lot. A number well-known circus staff people and performers were hired.

The 1936 season will be detailed,

The Mix side show bannerline in 1936.



as it was one of the best in the show's history.

The first *Billboard* article appeared in the January 11 issue. It noted that a big outlay of money was being invested in equipment. Denny Helms, general superintendent had 115 men working in quarters. All of the sleepers were being rebuilt. A new office truck was being built. A new light plant semi was to hold four generators. A new 150 foot big top with three 50s was ordered. (If this was true it would have dwarfed the Downie Bros. 120 foot top. The Cole Bros. big top was only ten feet wider.) New jacks and stringers were being built. Twelve new Ford tractors were added. Rhoda Royal and his assistants were working new stock.

The January 25 *Billboard* reported two elephants had arrived in quarters. Homer Hobson, Sr. was breaking a leaping greyhound act And Rhoda Royal was working on a liberty act.

The February 1 *Billboard* reported that Tom Mix and his wife had returned from South America. The paint shop had turned out 26 trucks and sleeper trailers,

sixteen people were working in the wardrobe department. The old ticket wagon was being rebuilt as a wardrobe trailer. Two new horse trailers were being finished. It was reported that there would be 85 head of stock.

The March 7 *Billboard* advised that the show would open on March 11. The new spread of canvas had arrived from the United States Tent and Awning Co. Alfredo Codona had been engaged as equestrian director. His wife Vera Bruce was to be in one of show's casting acts. Tom Mix was to present a ten horse liberty act.

Max Gruber's animal oddities would be a new feature. A new advance truck, large enough to carry thirty day's work of paper was already out ahead of the show. Five additional small advance trucks were also out. A new line of special



Mix at the door of his living bus in 1936.

lithograph paper was to be used.

The staff included D. E. Turney, manager; H. C. Baker, assistant manager; Robert Brown, treasurer; Vernon Arbuckle, secretary; D. W. Helms, superintendent; Grace Baker, press reprehensive; Dan Pyne, general press representative. Harry B. Chipman, press representative; Charles Warrell, front door superintendent; George W. Helms, 24 hour man; P. N. Branson, general agent; J. R. Herve, contracting agent; Edward L. Conroy, manager of advance car number one; Ted Metz, side show manager; Jack Burslem, superintendent of concessions; Baldy Allister, cookhouse boss.

Following the March 11 opening the *Billboard* of March 21 published an extensive article: "The Tom Mix

Circus opened March 11 at Compton, California.

"Matinee attendance was about two-thirds and at night somewhat above the matinee. Ted Metz, manager of the side show, stated that his take was little short of business last year at the opening. Looking over the setup on the lot, 'Flash' is written over the show. There evidently was much thought on the part of Dial Turney and Tom Mix to put plenty of eye appeal in the layout. Of the canvas complement, everything except the menagerie is new. A side wall 8 feet high, red and white stripes, encompasses the layout.

"The big top is 150 feet, with three 50s; side wall red and white, top white. On inside there is red reinforcing, 25 feet at the ridge, with Mix's monogram at intervals. Every quarter pole has red reinforcing disk and every quarter pole hole is shackled. All poles are white and blue and new cluster lighting plan adds greatly. New marquee and back curtain, this too is red and white. Five-foot net is to be used around big top side walls for ventilation. Band stand is a nifty affair. It is enclosed with 4-foot wood railing, has brilliant coloring and much gold leaf and tinsel; an orange and blue canopy is over the stand. Cookhouse, dining tent, horse tent and a new sleeping tent are same coloring. The sleeping tents are equipped with collapsible special cots. Ted Metz' side show, too, presents a striking appearance; same coloring in canvas and the banners all new and artistically done.

"The program is very pleasing and there is a diversified line of acts. As usual, Tom Mix gets stellar honors and is seen much in the program. Splendid horse acts feature the performance, most of them in new routines, the work of Rhoda Royal. The new pedestal number is a standout. The gaited saddle horses and menage numbers were featured spots in the program. Arbaugh's flying act working double rigging, flying lengthwise of the top, is a splendid feature, and Erma Ward is the same finished artist who received a tremendous hand. Hal Silvers' somer-



Special program published for the Goldblatt Chicago engagement in 1936.

saulting and bounding on tight wire went over to a big hand. Max Gruber's Oddities of the Jungle fits very nicely in program. The Riding Hobsons, four in troupe, with striking wardrobe, drew much applause. The Jordans have a splendid feature act and the Bell troupe, enlarged, registered a distinct hit.

"The Program

"The spectacle, while appearing on track and rings, is divided into two motifs, first the Canadian Mounted Police, correctly uniformed and very novel idea, then attractive girls costumed in the dress of the Gay '90s up to present time. This titled From the Gay '90s to Ever Present. Costumes designed by Mrs. Dail Turney, assist-

A Mix semi-trailer parked behind the Coliseum in Chicago.



There were 82 mounted persons, elephants in new trappings and same for ponies. The usual lead stock was noted, also clowns, etc.

"Display No. 2-Rhoda Royal's newly evolved Garland number in the rings, 24 people and horses.

"Display No. 3-In all rings, performing dogs and monkeys, by Homer Hobson Sr., Miss Ford and Joe Bowers, Miss Ford's turntable dogs went over big.

"Display No. 4-Girl acts, singing and swinging, a novel act. Ladders hung from flying act rigging, in units of four, with exception of Vera Bruce in center and Arlene Arley. The girls, Vera Bruce, Gladys Forrest, Gernadine Johnson, Gayle Thomas, Lillian Arbuckle, Miss Brown, Peggy Baker, Mary Arley, Agnes Arley, Mildred Asher, Jessie Arbaugh, Joy Myers, Dorothy Hubbell, Julia

Asher, Mickey McKinley, Bettie McVeigh, Vivienne Jordan, Flo Hudson and Corinne Turney.

"Display No. 5-Clowns, Bill Ash, Abe Goldstein, Jimmie Davison, Al Heiwig, E. P. Douglass; Arnst Augsted, drum major; Roy Brown, Bobby Nelson, George Carl, Jimmie Johnson, Jose Gonzalez and Jack (Shorty) Knapp. At this appearance and in those that followed several new walkarounds and comedy stunts drew much applause.

"Display No. 6-Lady principal acts, with Ella Linton and Juanita doing very pleasing acts. Clowns for stops in riding numbers.

"Display No. 7-Special announcement of appearance of Tom Mix.

"Displays 8 and 9. First Tom and 'Tony' jumping in and out of large casks, and for finish "Tony" jumping thru elevated casks. Then Tom's shooting presentation, doing difficult shots at stationary and moving objects and lying on back, shooting lights from an erected dome. Here appeared Tom and his Liberty ranch horses, this number trained by Rhoda Royal and done by Tom in fine fashion.

"Display No. 10-Clown number with burlesque boxing match.

"Display No. 11-Rhoda Royal's newly broken six black and white horses in center ring,

with high pedestal finish on the track-high school, menage, gaited saddle horses and featured horses. Mrs. Rhoda Royal riding stagger-gaited and dancing horse, 'Ponca'; Miss Ford on saddle-gaited 'King'; Carrin Turney, high-school horse, 'Christie,' and Lillian Arbuckle, dancing and trick horse, 'Painted Desert.' The women costumed in polo carried out a polo theme attire and was a decide standout.

"Display No. 12 Over center ring Charley Arley, difficult hand balancing, with revolving trapeze for finish doing head balance.

"Display No. 13 Comedy acrobatic number by the O'Donnell, Bell and Arbaugh troupes.

"Display 14-Special announcement for Erma Ward, aerialist, working alone. Did 87 dislocations at finish and drew big hand.

"First concert announcement by George Surtees.

"Display No. 16-The Jordans, in center ring, doing high-chair pyramid and foot loops. In other rings, performing ponies, by Homer Hobson Sr. and Miss Ford.

"Display No. 17-Clown number.

"Display No. 18-The Arleys, in center ring, shoulder perch act and gyroscope finish. Special announcement.

"Display No. 19-In center ring Max Gruber's Jungle Oddities--elephant, zebra and Great Dane dog, a very pleasing offering. In other rings, elephants worked by Captain Reece and Tommy Hensley.

"Second concert announcement.

"Display No. 21-Hal Silvers, somersaulting, bounding tight-wire act; the drunk stunt going over big.

"Special announcement.

"Display No. 23-All rings, acrobatic number. Center ring, the Jordans, Johnny Jordan, Vivienne Jordan, Paul Lorenzo Jordan; Jimmie and Ann O'Donnell, Mickey McKinley, Bennie Bonta, Al Heiwig and George Carl, ground tumbling, pyramids and finish, double somersault from springboard to catch in chair on shoulder of one of the troupe. Ring 1, the Arleys-Charles Girarcl, Danny Jordan, Louis Arley, Olive and Agnes Oliver. Ring 3, Bell Troupe, Gus



One of the many billboards used to advertise the Chicago engagement.

Bell, Bettie McVeigh, Harold Ward, Bob Behee, Jimmy Johnson, Girnadine Johnson, ground tumbling and springboard. The acts wore attractive wardrobe.

"Display No. 24-The Riding Hobsons-Homer Jr., Herbert and Juanita, with Homer Sr. keeping up the act. Nice round of, applause. Homer's comedy got a lot of laughs.

"Display No. 25-The laugh event of the show, Jose Lopez and Shorty Knapp with dogs dressed as bulls, styled Mexican bullfight.

"Display No. 26-Clown number.

"Display No. 27-The Flying Arbaughs-Jessie Arbaugh, Jim Arbaugh, Erma Ward, Vera Bruce and Bettie McVeigh the flyers; Harold Ward and Bud Asher, catchers-on double rigging. Did difficult doubles, singles and twisters. A splendid act and received much applause. Noted is the fact that every aerial act works off the rigging for the flying act. There is a fly gallery in the top with two men stationed to handle the rigging for these acts.

"The concert (wild west numbers) is under the direction of Hank Linton.

Tom Mix heads the contingent, doing rope spinning, shooting and

Max Gruber's Oddities of the Jungle act.



lariat horse catching.

Hank Linton, trick roper; Jack Knapp and Passion, the little comedy mule; Tommy Privett, trick rider and roper; Chief Sky Eagle, archery expert; Princess Silver Cloud, trick rider; Peggy Baker, trick rider; Herman Nowlin, fancy roper; Ella Linton trick roping and Gavle Thomas, trick rider.

"The Side Show-Ted Metz is manager; William (Red) Lowney, George Surtees, Raleigh Brown and H. Morgan, on ticket boxes and making openings; Wingy, boss canvasman, with four assistants; N. V. Robinson, ticket taker. Attractions Leona, mentalist and crystal gazer; Schlitz, pinhead; the Scotch Macks, bagpipes and drums; Josephine Parr, obese woman; Henrietta, leopard girl; Robert, the pony boy; Fraston, magic, illusions and inside lecturer; Lucky Ball, sword swallower; Roberta-Ray; Rose Lee, three-legged girl; Lady Emilie, snake enchantress; Sally, chimpanzee, worked by George Surtees. Top is 145 x 22."

The show played a three-day stand in Oakland April 16 to 19. The April 25 *Billboard* reported Mix was at his Hollywood home, recovering from an illness, which for a time threatened his life. Mix was recovering from an attack of pneumonia, suffered a relapse when the show reached Monterey, California, more than a week ago. He was rushed to a Hollywood hospital, but is now home and expects to rejoin the circus within the next ten days, according to H. C. Baker, legal adjuster for the show."

The circus played Sacramento on April 22 where over 700 sheets of paper were posted.

Mix continued playing stands in California until it went into Oregon at Grant's Pass on May 4. The Al G. Barnes show provided opposition to Mix in California and part of Oregon. The first stand in Idaho was Emmett on May 14.

Bosie, Idaho was shown on May 15 and it produced the first turnaway of the season. On May 19 the show was in Burley, Idaho when it had an unforgettable day

The circus arrived in town at six in the morning under a

dark sky. Shortly after the matinee the wind picked up with frightening force. There were all the makings of a serious blow-down. The menagerie top was quickly flattened. The contents of the big top were blown through the air. Seat planks, poles and stringers were tossed in the air. Tom Mix was injured by a flying grandstand platform. The big top was lowered and the night show was cancelled. It was the only lost performance of the entire season.

After ten days in Idaho the route then took the circus through Wyoming and Colorado. It entered Kansas at Hays on June 1 after a 307-mile jump from Sterling, Colorado. A two-day stand was played in Kansas City, Missouri on June 8 and 9.

The June 20 *Billboard* reported: "Chicago, June 13.-The Tom Mix Circus is definitely set to open at the Coliseum here June 29 for a 10-day engagement under auspices of the Goldblatt stores.

"Goldblatt's, operating nine large popular-priced department stores, has bought the show outright and is going to put on a tremendous promotional campaign which is expected to attract many thousands into the Goldblatt stores. While no definite figure has been given out, it is reported on good authority that Mix is to receive \$30,000 for the engagement.

"The show is to be largely augmented and Mr. Simon, promotional manager for Goldblatt, states that it will be second only to the Ringling show. In addition to using large newspaper space Goldblatt's will stage many novel publicity stunts. The show will come into Chicago with every truck bannered 'Goldblatt's Presents the Tom Mix Circus.'

"Instead of the usual tie up whereby a coupon is given with every purchase and is good for a ticket to the circus on payment of a small charge at the box office, the tickets are to be sold outright.

"There are to be no strings to it," said Mr. Simon. "Tickets will be sold at 15 or 25 cents, only in Goldblatt stores. No purchase of any kinds will be necessary. The object, of course, is



to get people into the stores. Tickets sold at the Coliseum will be at the regular price.'

"We expect the circus to be very successful,' Mr. Simon stated. 'We don't expect the admissions to pay the full amount the show is costing us, but if it falls short several thousand dollars we still will regard it as a very good investment.'

"For several years Goldblatt's have staged parades and other stunts of a circusy nature and they are fully sold on the value of such exploitation."

Further information appeared in the July 4 *Billboard*: "Aurora, Illinois, June 27. 'The Tom Mix Circus will move from here to Chicago for a 10-day engagement at the Coliseum, sponsored by the Goldblatt stores. Manager Dail Turney and General Agent P. N. Branson arranged details. The latter was in that city for last two weeks, supervising the billing. Edward L. Conroy, general press representative,

This girl on an elephant led the opening spec.



handled the newspapers. The Chicago dailies, as well as foreign language papers, were used. The Hammond (Indiana.) *Times*, the Joliet (Illinois) *News Herald and Spectator* and the Gary (Indiana) *Post-Tribune* carried special advertising and publicity. The Goldblatt stores are decorated with circus posters, flags and banners. During the engagement Goldblatt's will play host to many under-privileged children, inmates of homes and institutions and to various newsboy groups.

"The circus will be augmented by additional acts, including the Kenneth Waite Troupe of clowns. Cliff McDougall, of press staff, and Grace Baker, personal press representative for Tom Mix, will attend to publicity details during the engagement. The north hail of the Coliseum will be used for the menagerie and side show, as well as an exhibition place for Goldblatt products."

Although no lithographing was done in Chicago 200 twenty-four sheet billboards were used and 12,000 sheets of paper were posted.

A report of the Chicago engagement appeared in the July 11 *Billboard*: "Chicago, July 4.-The Tom. Mix Circus, playing a 10-day engagement at the Coliseum under auspices of Goldblatt's, large department store firm, is giving an excellent show. Business early in the week was light but built up after the first few days. A downpour early Monday evening probably cut attendance.

"Show is nicely dressed and well paced. No waits or stalling and something doing all the time. Tom Mix is, of course, featured. His shooting exhibition, horse acts and roping all receive heavy applause. Irma Ward gives a pleasing exhibition of aerial gymnastics. The Hobsons have an excellent riding act. Homer Jr., Herbert and Juanita are all accomplished riders, and Juanita does some crupper jumps that are unexcelled. The Arbaughs, in which Vera Bruce and Irma Ward, among others, appear, give an entertaining exhibition of the flying art.

"Augmenting the show are Albert Powell in his very fine trapeze act and Kenneth Waite and troupe, whose clown numbers are up to

Kenneth's usual standard.

"Finest of the comedy numbers is the bull fight, staged in the center ring, with three 'bulls' participating and creating gales of laughter.

"Max Gruber, with his elephant and zebra, presents a novel and entertaining act. Various other features are nicely presented, and as a whole the show deserves praise.

"All ticket arrangements are in the hands of Goldblatt's. There has been very little box-office, sale, most of the tickets being purchased at Goldblatt's stores, which are located in all parts of the city. Ticket sale was purposely arranged in this manner in order to attract people to the stores, where tickets are sold at half the regular price.

"Goldblatt's introduced something new to circuses here by practically turning the Coliseum into a department store. A score or more stands were located around the Coliseum walls and everything from ties to fresh meats was on sale.

"The house trailers of the show's performers are located inside the Coliseum and are used as dressing rooms, and in some instances sleeping quarters."

More about the Chicago stand was reported in the July 18 *Billboard*: "Chicago, July 11. In spite of terrific heat that prevailed during most of the engagement, the Tom Mix Circus made an astonishing record in the 10 days it spent at the Coliseum under auspices of Goldblatt Brothers, department store firm. Total attendance was more than 100,000, which probably sets an all time record for an indoor circus engagement in midsummer.

"Starting with comparatively light houses, the from Fourth of July on near capacity crowds were the rule. Tom Mix himself, the Goldblatt Brothers and Charles H. Hall, manager of the Coliseum, all were highly pleased with the unusual record made.

"Show presented at the Coliseum was an excellent one and went over big with the crowds. Tom Mix, the



The Tom Mix main ticket wagon was well decorated.

movie cowboy, proved that he still is the idol of young America. Entering without special announcement, he was received with thunderous applause, and his every appearance through the show was the signal for an ovation.

"Using three rings and two stages, the show, as augmented for the Coliseum engagement, included the following: Gala introductory, pageant, depicting the 'Parade of the Royal Mounted.'

"The Royal Mounted in Garland Entry.

"Performing dogs in three rings.

"Kaarin and her aerial ballet.

"Clowns, with some clever numbers produced by Kenneth Waite. Among the joeys were Will Ash, Jack Knapp, Roy Brown, Joe Bowers, Abe Goldstein, Jimmy Davison, Fred Douglas, Al Sherman, Gus Bell, Tom Walters, Howard Bell, Waite, Tom Abeam, Stanley Nichols, Julius Adair, Robert Dale, Al Friedman, Pete Nash.

"Riding acts in three rings-Juanita Hobson, Herbert Hobson and Ella

Carl Robinson and the Tom Mix band.



Davenport.

"Introduction of Tom Mix, to an ovation. Mix does a shooting number, and then works his T Bar M Ranch horses in center ring.

"Helen Ford and company, polo girls, on track, with Joy Meyers, Jessie Arbaugh, Kathleen Turney, Anne Brown; Elsie Wairath, Darlene Harding, Flo

Bursiem, Carrie Royal, Vera Codona, Helen Howe, Mickey McGinley, Betty McVey, Mildred Asher, Julia Asher, Dorothy Hubbell, Lula Nowland, Elaine Linton, Wanda Bell, Vivian Jordan and Anne O'Donnell.

"Burlesque boxing number, Abe Goldstein and Jimmy Davison.

"Equilibristic numbers, Mickey McGinley, Charles Arley and Joy Myers.

"Les Cotelettis Troupe, acrobatic knockabout comics.

"Irma Ward, clever exhibition of one arm planges.

"Tom Mix's company of cowboys, with Tom Mix in person and Tony Junior.

"Filbert's Funny Ford with Dale and Hardy.

"The Golden Girls in the Golden Whirl, Mildred Asher and Betty McVey, and the Arley Brothers, perch-pole artists.

"Rhoda Royal and his famous Liberty horses in center ring, Rhoda putting them through some clever maneuvers. In end rings the Tom Mix ponies.

"Trapeze acts. Albert Powell in center; Johnny Jordan and George Arley over end rings.

"Oddities of the Jungle," elephant and zebra worked by Max Gruber.

"Bell-Jordon-Marks troupes of acrobats, tumblers and gymnasts.

"The Riding Hobsons, featuring Homer Hobson II, clown rider, and Juanita and Herbert Hobson.

"Bull fight. Clown numbers on track.

"Aerial number. The Flying Arbaughs, featuring James Arbaugh.

"Finale.

"Rhoda Royal, equestrian director, and Aifredo Codona, assistant director,

put the show on at a fast clip. Carl Robinson, musical director, dishes out real circusy music.

"Mr. Simon, exploitation manager for Goldblatt Brothers, did a fine job of exploitation that, together with the fine performance given by Tom Mix, was responsible for the outstanding success of the engagement."

While the show was in Chicago a number of the trucks were repainted.

The avalanche of advertising brought total attendance in Chicago to 102,875. Two turn-aways were recorded.

The canvas tour resumed on July 9 at Elkhart, Indiana. Moving quickly, the circus went through Ohio, Pennsylvania and into New York State at Jamestown on July 17.

By July 18 the show had traveled 8,000 miles with no serious accidents. A new menagerie tent had been delivered from United States Tent and Awning, replacing the one lost in the Burley, Idaho blowdown.

The September 12 *Billboard* contained this report: "Elizabeth, New Jersey, Sept. 5.-Twenty sixth week for the Tom Mix Circus was a busy and profitable one.

Many good-sized towns and excellent shopping centers were played. Mornings found nearly everyone downtown. Major Braun, an old friend of Mix, spent the day at New Britain, Connecticut. Together they visited the Veterans' Hospital, where Mr. Mix spoke to bedridden unfortunates. He also had breakfast there with the Major and several old acquaintances. Mix then went to the orphanage, where he invited all the youngsters en masse to attend the matinee.

"Show had some rain at Danbury, Connecticut, but it did not seriously affect business. Mix played host to more than 100 newsboys there. Mrs. Dail Turney's sister joined her there

for a short visit. New Jersey has proved a most hospitable territory thus far. Newark on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. Nearly everyone spent Sunday in New York. Mix spent part of the day with Jack Dempsey and called on Mrs. Dempsey and the new baby at the hospital. Monday Sylvia Smith, columnist from *The Morning Ledger* interviewed Mix and devoted her entire column to photos of Mix and Ledger newsies. Dan Pyne and Harry Chipman have returned to the show and are doing a nice bit of advance work.

Mabel Ward Mix, Tom's fourth and last wife. Photo taken on Sells-Floto.



"John Ringling was a guest Tuesday evening and among those in his party were Marjorie and Mrs. Saunders. Mr. and Mrs. Alfredo Codona also enjoyed a visit with Ringling. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Warrell entertained Mr. Warrell's brother, small son and mother Sunday and Monday in Newark. Jersey City gave the show a good day's business despite some rain. Harry Baker and the mis-

sus entertained Baker's relatives from Long Island. Elizabeth gave the show fair business, with a crowd in attendance at night. Ted Metz's side show also did a good business there.

"Contest between Mix and the cowboys in the concert is getting interesting and very close. Mix, however, is still ahead and has the least misses."

The September 12 *Billboard* reported on a possible winter quarters site: "New York, September 5.-Recurrent rumors that the Torn Mix show would establish winter quarters somewhere on the Atlantic Coast were confirmed by Dail Turney, manager of the show and Mix's personal representative, who informed The

Billboard that the organization will quarter 'somewhere in Georgia.' Turney, associated with the cowboy star uninterruptedly since 1921, said he was not as yet prepared to reveal the exact location in the State, but stated that it would be on the basis of 'permanent residence,' registered as such. This was taken to mean that the show will quarter in that State for one or more fall-winter seasons.

"Turney was interviewed in Newark, New Jersey, the second of a two-day stand on the Springfield avenue and Grove street lot, moving to Jersey City on Wednesday, Elizabeth on Thursday; Easton, Pennsylvania, on Friday and exhibiting in Allentown today. Biz in Newark was good, including attendance, at the concert.

"Since coming east by long moves from the Middle West show has been clicking steadily, according to Turney. Outfit has touched practically all corners of the map, inaugurating its season out of winter quarters in Compton, California, grazing the Southwestern and Canadian borders and now routed in the East. It is said to be the only motorized show, which has ever played from Coast to Coast. Jumps in the mountainous West averaged about 175 miles, but in this level section about 100 miles. Next week will find the show in Maryland, Virginia; etc., on the way into deep South. It is scheduled to finish its season during the week of November 2.

"There were many visitors in Newark, including John Ringling, whose praise of the show made the headlines in Newark newspapers; Jack Dempsey, former world's heavy weight titleholder, Billy Hamilton Sedge Meikie, Jimmy Dugan, Billy Seamon, Oscar Lowanda and many others. Abe Goldstein, clown; Ray Goody, wire walker, and Max Gruberg, animal trainer, were doing plenty of greeting in the backyard, aided by Rhoda Royal, equestrian director; Homer Hobson, veteran of the white tops, and others."

Mix business in the south was reported in the October 10 *Billboard*: "Columbia, South Carolina, Oct. 3.-The Tom Mix Circus recently ran into some heavy rains, but business is holding up fine. Sunday off in Savannah, Georgia, and showed



Lot view showing the short living trailers.

under auspices of Shriners on Monday. Two packed houses, on Sunday a reception was given Mr. Mix by Shriners at local clubhouse and Savannah Hotel extended to Mr. Mix the courtesy of the governor's suite there. Newspapers were generous with space and the radio station reserved time for an interesting interview of Mr. Mix Sunday evening.

"Long jumps, but Denny Helms has had everything ready for afternoon show before time to open doors, most of heavy loads leaving at night and arriving without mishap. Rabbit Bates, supervisor of gas and oil for transportation, had his gas truck newly painted in Anderson, also stake driver.

"Very large crowds are coming in for the concert. Hank Linton is in charge of the after-show performance. The contest between cowboys is getting to be keen competition. Mr. Mix is still in the lead so far. Homer Hobson Sr. and several of the folks in the backyard are going in for book reviews, the lending library being located in Mr. Mix's bus. Everyone is enjoying fried chicken suppers these days, the chicken being delivered from door to door by resource."

The show moved south from

Pennsylvania and quickly moved through Maryland, Virginia, and North and South Carolina. Nine stands

were played in North Carolina and four in Georgia before going in South Carolina on September at Charleston on September 29. It went back into North Carolina on October 5 at Wilmington and stayed in that state for two week. The strange route then took the show back to Virginia for eight stands. Six stands were then played in Tennessee and one date back in Georgia at Rome on November 4. It closed on November 5 in Anniston, Alabama. The original route had Huntsville, Alabama booked for November 6, Decatur November 7 and Gadsden November 9.

It is interesting to note that the drawing of the route on the cover of the 1936 route book shows the route extending into South Florida then turning north and ending in the Florida Panhandle.

The final report on the Mix show was published in the November 21 *Billboard*: "Anniston, Alabama, November 14.-The Tom Mix Circus closed a most profitable season here November 5. Opening in Compton, California, early in March, show exhibited in 26 States, with visits to many big cities, including a four days' stay in San Francisco and Oakland; two days in Kansas City, 10

days in Chicago at the Coliseum, two days in Newark, New Jersey, and two at Norfolk, Virginia. Exhibitions were presented in practically all the big New England cities. The show covered some 15,000 miles, with many jumps ranging from 180 to 300 miles without a mishap, the longest run being from Sterling, Colorado to Hayes, Kansas.

"Manager Dail Turney and General Agent Pearl N. Branson, selected winter quarters at Anniston as the most desirable after viewing many other locations offered the show in the Southland. Through the efforts of Charles Vaughn, secretary of the local Chamber of Commerce, the grounds and plant of the former U. S. Pipe Company were placed at the disposal of the show.

"The grounds cover 47 acres and are enclosed by sturdy wire fencing. A paved roadway extends through the grounds, which are landscaped with shrubbery and flower gardens. Company watchmen on 24 hour duty in eight hour shifts supervise the main entrance gate. The buildings are of brick and steel with concrete floors. Steam heat is provided from a central plant, which also generates electrical power for lights and motor-driven machinery.

"The former foundry building, some 400 by 100 feet square, will house the trucks and trailers. Near by are a fully equipped machine shop, a wood-working plant and a cafeteria, which will be used as the circus-dining hall.

"The horses will be housed in a double brick building. A carload of lumber was purchased locally to be used in making horse stalls. With

A Tom Mix Circus lot in 1937.





Jack Burslem, candy stands boss; Dial Turney, manager and Charles F. Warrell, assistant manager.

horses on one side of this building, the other side will be used for elephants and ponies.

"Superintendent Denny Helms and his crew have the rolling stock under cover in the main building. The canvas and rigging are stored in a smaller brick building. The wardrobe and electrical effects have been put away in front portion of the bath building. The circus office, in charge of Robert Brown, is also located in this building.

"Tom Mix, owner of the circus, left for his Beverly Hills home immediately after closing performance. He is under contract to make one or more super features in Technicolor for one of the major producing firms.

"Most of the performers and riders and many musicians and concession men left for the West Coast. Mrs. Dail Turney and her niece, Doris Warm, motored to California. Mr. and Mrs. Alfredo Codona, Irma Ward, the Arleys, the Arbaugh and Bell troupes, Hank and Ella Linton, Mrs. and Mrs. Herman Nowland, Abe Goldstein, Jack Bursiem and others left for the Coast."

General agent P. N. Branson wrote an interesting letter to D. C. Hawn on November 25. "... Suppose you heard about the truck show playing the Coliseum, everyone thought it a big joke in the middle of the season. But I think we slipped one over on some of the smart fellows and made a lot of money, while they were all out fighting the heat. Our season was wonderful, until the last three weeks, which were very bad on account of

steady rain and cold weather, but show came in with a good net and nothing to worry about. I do not think it will be enlarged any, is plenty large enough for trucks. We carried 114 pieces of equipment counting the 12 pieces on the advance and went from coast to coast and Canadian border to Florida.

"I am looking for Mr. Turney in a few days, if he decides to go to Chicago for the Showman's meeting. Would like to see you and also have you meet Mr. Turney, he is certainly a regular fellow and Mr. Mix is one of the best in the world to work for, never says a word as to what I should do. I just go along and use my own judgment. As usual there were plenty of knockers this last season, but they do not get very far around this show. We have a good staff and Denny Helms certainly keeps the show moving.

"I am trying hard to get this show on 15 or 20 cars, what a show we could have on 20 cars, we could go places that we can not go with trucks and the nut would not be much more than it is now. It runs now about \$2,000 a day counting winter quarters expense."

A 1937 Mix newspaper ad.

The 1936 Tom Mix Circus was the largest motorized show on the road. An official inventory was taken on June 1, 1937. The listing was the same as in 1936.

Tractors and semis. All were Fords unless listed otherwise. The years are the model year of the truck.

No. 54 1934 Platforms

- No. 55 1934 Jacks
- No. 60 1934 Stake and Chain
- No. 61 1935 Big top poles
- No. 63 1935 Light plant
- No. 73 1935 Cookhouse
- No. 75 1934 Side show
- No. 80 1934 Stringers
- No. 81 1934 Props
- No. 83 1935 Stables
- No. 86 1934 Seats
- No. 87 1935 Props
- No. 88 1934 Menagerie poles
- No. 90 1935 Elephant
- No. 91 1935 Elephant
- No. 92 1936 Horses
- No. 95 1935 Chairs
- No. 96 1935 Canvas
- No. 97 1934 Horses
- No. 99 1934 Cookhouse
- No. 102 1934 Dodge Band sleeper
- No. 5 1935 Advance car
- Straight Trucks
- No. 32 1932 GMC Tom Mix props
- No. 34 1933 International ticket wagon

- No. 36 1933 Dodge Horses
- No. 41 1934 Cage
- No. 43 1934 Cage
- No. 45 1934 Cage
- No. 48 1934 Cage
- No. 49 1934 Cage
- No. 51 1934 Ring curbs
- No. 52 1934 Trappings
- No. 62 1934 Side poles
- No. 65 1934 Planks
- No. 67 1935 Mechanics
- No. 68 1935 Wardrobe
- No. 69 1937 #2 Mechanics
- No. 70 1931 Chevrolet
- Candy stands
- No. 74 Calliope
- No. 77 1935 Workingmen's bus
- No. 82 1934 Candy stock
- No. 84 1936 Stake driver
- No. 85 Candy equipment
- No. 89 1935 Gasoline truck
- Autos
- No. 78 1935 Assistant manager car
- No. 103 1929 Lincoln Old convoy
- No. 104 1936 Performers station wagon
- No. 105 1936 Performers station wagon
- No. 106 1934 GMC Tom Mix

BANGOR
MON. JUNE 14
BASS PARK GROUNDS

Tickets on sale circus day
Sweet Drug Co., 26 Main St.



TOM MIX

CIRCUS

200 WORLD-FAMED ARENIC STARS
Including
IRMA WARD
RAY GOODE

FAMOUS RIDING HANNEFORDS

ROYAL'S LIBERTY HORSES
FLYING ARBAUGHS
MAX GRUBER'S ACTING ANIMALS
COTELETTIS TROUPE

Shows of Others
Performances - 2 and 8 P. M.
Shows Open - 1 and 7 P. M.
TOM MIX IN PERSON AT EVERY PERFORMANCE

bus

- No. 107 1934 Performers
- No. 108 1930 Cadillac, Performers
- No. 109 1934 Dodge Performers
- No. 110 1934 Performers

No. 111 1933 Old advance agent car

Small trailers

28 House trailers
1 Closed trailer for candy stock
1 Closed trailer ladies rest room
1 Cage trailer for dogs
1 Open trailer props
1 Large closed ticket trailer
1 Dressing trailer for Tom Mix
1 Closed trailer for hamburger stock

Animals

36 horses
8 Shetland ponies
2 Mules
3 elephants, Babe, Queen and Little Eva
1 Male lion
2 Female lions
13 Monkeys
1 Sun bear
3 Zebra
1 Llama
1 Baboon
12 Dogs

Canvas

1 Side show tent, 130 x 20 feet.
Sixteen banners
1 Menagerie tent, 80 feet with three 40s
1 Marquee, 30 x 30 feet 1 Icehouse tent, 20 x 20 feet
2 Midway candy stand tents
1 Big top, 130 feet with three 50s
The big top had four center poles; thirty-four 23-foot quarter poles; twenty 33-foot quarter poles; 450 wooden stakes; and 250 iron stakes.

Seating

1,200 Folding chairs
480 Blue planks
110 No. 2 Seat jacks
110 No. 4 Seat jacks
63 Twenty foot blue stringers
29 Twenty-six foot red stringers
96 Starback planks
140 Reserved seat platforms

The size the only big top listed as a 130 foot round top presents an interesting mystery. That was the size of the big top used in 1935. What about the new 150-foot big top touted in various *Billboard* references? Could it have been lost in the Burley, Idaho blowdown?

On February 5, 1937 a fire broke out in winter quarters and damaged several trucks, all were salvaged in time for the opening of the season.

Later in February 1937 the show sent a large tent to be used as din-

ing tent for flood refugees in Gadsden, Alabama, The show also loaned the use of it light plant truck and 1,500 folding chairs.

The 1937 season opened in Anniston, Alabama on March 31. New to the staff were Herb DuVal, legal adjuster; J. Herve, contracting agent; press agents Fred Smythe, and Irish Horan; John Agee, equestrian director; Gladstone H. Shaw, steward of cookhouse; and Bob Stevens, banner salesman. New acts included Ray Goode, wire walker; the George Hannedford family of riders the Three Bucks, comedy acrobats and tetterboard; clowns Bumpsy Anthony, Kinko and Jimmy Davidson.

The show headed north through Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas and was in Cape Girardeau, Missouri on April 14. Two stands in Illinois and six in Indiana took the circus to Ohio at Hamilton on April 23. Two days were played in Columbus on April 25 and 26 where the author visited.

The show headed east through Pennsylvania and New York. It entered Massachusetts on May 17 and played eleven dates in that state. Three days were shown in Washington D. C. July 26 to 28. Baltimore, Maryland was another three-day stand. Nine days were played in greater Philadelphia August 2 to 11.

Mix played the Canadian National Exhibition August 27 to September 11. The show then went west through New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Missouri. By

Ruth and Tom Mix ready for spec in 1938.



October 3 it was in Topeka, Kansas. The final weeks were in Arkansas. The season closed in El Dorado, Arkansas on November 6. A 94-mile run took the show to Texarkana, Texas where it went into winter quarters.

The 1938 season turned out to be the worst since 1875 according to Stuart Thayer. It affected the Mix show along with all others. In January general agent Pearl N. Branson became concerned about the future of the Mix operation and decided to look elsewhere for employment. At that point the 1938 season route had not been firmed up. He resigned and joined the Tim McCoy Wild West show as a local contractor. J. F. "Irish" Horan, who had been a press agent on the show, was named general agent. By May 1 Ray Blankenship had taken over the job.

After the McCoy show closed Branson returned to the Mix show as general agent. He was shocked to find the advance was in total disarray. Branson moved quickly to get the advance back on schedule.

The March 12 *Billboard* reported that eleven new semis had arrived at the Mix winter quarters from California. The article stated that the big top would be 130 feet with three 50s, probably the same tent as in 1937.

In spite of a poor economy the show planned a very strong performance, without cost cutting. The show traveled on 44 trucks, 24 of which were semi-trailers.

Daughter Ruth Mix and the Clarkonians flying act joined the circus. The season opened April 2 in Texarkana and remained in Texas until April 26.

Quickly moving east it was in Alton, Illinois on May 7. By May 14 the show entered Ohio at Springfield. Playing Pennsylvania and New York in May and June it turned back west cutting fast through Ohio and Illinois to play a long route in Wisconsin from June 30 to July 17.

Branson wrote to W. M. Temple of the Central Printing Co. in Mason City, Iowa on May 12 from Wellsville, New York: "Have not had time to write you since coming back over here, as I found the advance car 5 days ahead of the

show, no paper on the car and no dates, have finally gotten the car 8 days ahead and have the show headed as far back east as possible where we have a chance to get some money.

Tom Mix on Circus Belli. Dave Price collection.

"The way conditions are we will have to save every cent possible, so while the route as it is will get dates closer to the show, so do not run up any more until advised."

Manager Turney started to cut expenses in early June by firing all but six on the advance crew. The June 11 *Billboard* reported that 45 employees had been let go.

Business was slow from the start; the show cut the admission price from 50 to 20 cents. Wages were falling behind. Forty-five people were let go in an economy move. The show suffered a blowdown in Neenah, Wisconsin on July 10.

The economy was closing in on the circus business. Downie Bros. closed on June 4, but reopened later in the season. Ringling-Barnum closed on June 25, and later sent part of the show to join the Al G. Barnes outfit. On July 4 Seils-Sterling closed. Cole Bros. threw in the towel on August 6 and Newton Bros. folded on August 10.

Mix became discouraged by August 11 and he decided to quit. He had a European theater tour booked in September. He left the show putting his daughter Ruth, who had no experience, in charge. The operation was really run by manager Dial Turney.

In his 1972 book *The Life and Legend of Tom Mix*, Paul E. Mix wrote: "During the late thirties, Tom turned to drink to help drown his sorrows. On more than one occasion, he failed to make a personal appearance, mainly because he was 'under the influence.' His friends began to worry when Tom took off in the mid-



dle of the night, in his over-powered sports car, to get away from it all."

Tom slugged a spectator outside of his circus tent and was taken to court on an aggravated assault charge. Those who loved Tom hated to see him drinking to excess and they were reasonably successful in talking him into taking hold of his senses and returning to moderation." Mix's drinking problems were

generally well known in the circus business.

The show was cut to one ring as performers and workingmen drifted away. After floundering in Oklahoma and Texas it closed in Pecos, Texas on September 10.

The equipment was taken to the fairgrounds in El Paso. Most of the trucks were sold to an El Paso truck dealer. Norman Anderson bought the stake driver and Babe the elephant for the Bud Anderson circus. Paddy Conklin, a Canadian carnival owner, bought the big top and seats.

A report in the December 19 *Billboard* stated that Dail Turney was talking about putting the show on rails in 1939. This was wishful thinking on his part.

Although the 1938 season finished off the Tom Mix Circus it was successful from 1935 to 1937. Mix had done what no other Hollywood cowboy accomplished. Buck Jones, Jack Hoxie, Ken Maynard and Tim McCoy all tried their hand at operating an under canvas show; all failed.

Mix signed a new contract with Ralston in 1938. He sailed for a European tour in late August. Accompanied by Joe Bowers, his driver and valet, dwarf clown Jack Knapp and Bud and Rosa Carlell, rope spinners. He opened on September 5 at the London Palladium. Other dates were played in Europe through February 27, 1939.

Mix joined the Circus Belli in Denmark for an under canvas tour beginning in April. With war clouds hovering in Europe he left the Belli Circus and headed home on September 2, the day after World War II started.

Mix then toured theaters in the United States with a small vaudeville unit.

The colorful career on the "King of the Cowboys" ended on October 12, 1940. Mix was driving his Cord auto west on route 89 from Tucson, Arizona headed for Phoenix for his next scheduled appearance. Driving his high powered Cord at a very high speed he came to a detour sign, but it too late. He went down a dry gulch and the car turned over.

One of Mix's metal trunks then flew from the back seat and struck him in the head. He was killed instantly. When his body was recovered his wallet contained \$6,000 in cash and \$1,500 in travelers checks.

Funeral services were held on October 16 at Forest Lawn Memorial Park in Glendale, California, where he was buried.

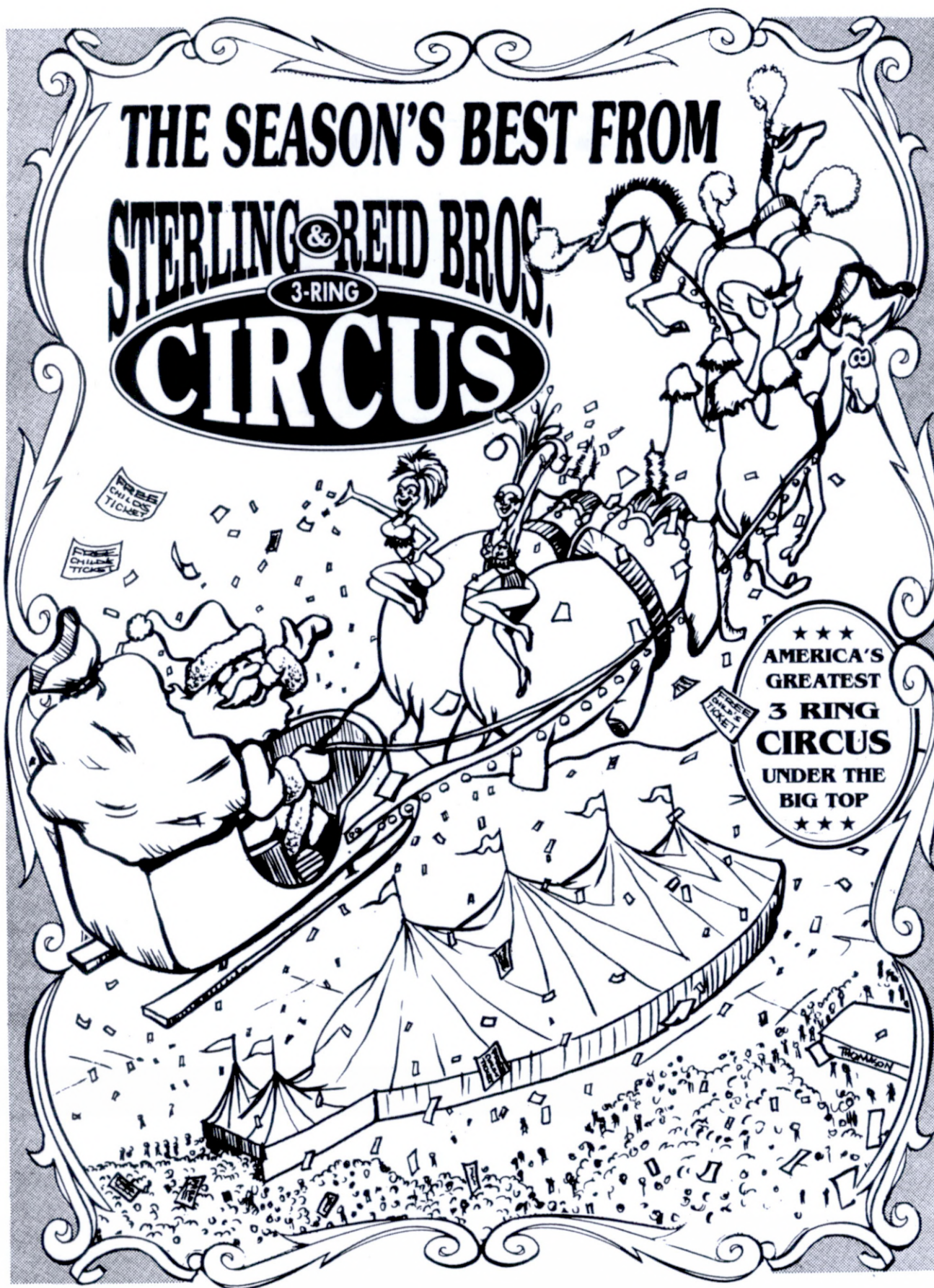
Mix's life time income from films and other appearances totaled around \$6,000,000, but at death his estate was only worth \$115,000.

During his lifetime press agents fabricated and embellished many stories about Tom Mix's exploits. A number of these myths were published many times. The misinformation was published so often that Mix himself began to believe and repeat it. An article in the 1930 Sells-Floto Circus program included a number of the fabrications.

The myths included: Mix was not one-eighth Cherokee Indian. Mix did not attend the Virginia Military Institute. He did not serve with Teddy Roosevelt in the Battle of San Juan Hill. Mix did not serve in the army during the Philippine Insurrection or the Boxer Rebellion in China. He did not participate in the Boer War in South Africa.

References:

Joe Bradbury; Stuart Thayer; *The Tom Mix Book*, by Bud Norris; *The Life and Legend of Tom Mix*, by Paul E. Mix; *Tom Mix Portrait of a Superstar*, by Richard F. Seiverling; and the Circus World Museum.





Seasons Greetings



from Lawrence A. Fisher,
President and CEO,
and all staff at
Circus World Museum

Own a piece of circus history!

In 2002 the last canvas big top
in use in the United States came down.
You can own a piece of this big top
to commemorate the end of a circus tradition.
All it takes is a \$250 tax-deductible donation
to Circus World Museum.
Please call us toll free for more information.

550 Water Street, Baraboo, Wisconsin
1-866-693-1500 www.circusworldmuseum.com

From Horse Power to Horsepower The Caterpillar Tractor and the Circus

By Fred Dahlinger, Jr.

Copyright © 2002

If you mention the word "cats" around most circus people, it brings to mind the excitement of lions, tigers and other exotic felines performing in the big steel arena. But another, more powerful form of roaring beast, also known as a "CAT" in circus parlance, performed remarkable feats in moving the mightiest traveling circuses from 1938 to 1956. Beyond proving themselves a reliable and economical substitute for the baggage horse, an animal that helped to define the very nature of the circus for over a century, Caterpillar crawler-type tractors effectively accomplished many specialized jobs for the circus.

The Horse Culture of the Circus

The modern circus, founded in 1768 and brought to America in 1793, was created as a horse-based operation. Performances were traditionally built around the performing horse, or "ring stock," as they were termed in the business. Horses were specially trained to support the skilled activities of bareback riders, equestrians and equestriennes. They also appeared in the ring singly and in liberty groups, free to move in a variety of choreographed motions under the watchful eye of the trainer. And they pulled all sorts of vehicles,

from racing chariots to elaborate carriages, as part of their repertoire of acts.

Commencing in 1825, draft horses were employed to pull circus baggage wagons overland between the daily engagements of the traveling tent circus. These "baggage stock" were initially like generic farm animals, and were "horse-traded" as such with farmers along the circus routes to replenish their stock. As breeds were developed and recognized, the Percheron or Norman horse became the favored circus workhorse. It combined agility with strength and a sound disposition. The number of horses that hauled a circus became a means of judging the size of an overland circus. A 100-horse circus was likely twice the size of one with 50 horses. Unfortunately, the baggage stock ate year round but all they could do was pull wagons during the season.

The advent of the complete rail-

The circus remained a bastion of the working horse long after most businesses converted to motorized vehicles. The near two hundred Ringling-Barnum horses in this view were living on borrowed time in 1936. Edward Kelty photograph, Circus World Museum.

road circus in 1872 did not alter the traveling show's demands for equine power. Their daily journeys were shorter than before, but they made several round trip journeys between the railroad yards and the show grounds. Toward the turn of the century the weight of their loads also increased as the larger wagons then being built traversed paved city streets and no longer had to navigate country dirt roads.

At its zenith, the largest of the railroad circuses carried and cared for over 350 head of baggage stock. They were commonly used in teams of two, four, six, eight and sometimes ten horses per team, with up to 40 head assembled together for special parade hitches. The animals were housed on the road under tents and in barns during the winter. Special railroad cars with internal feeding apparatus were purchased for their transport, portable blacksmith facilities carried for shoeing work, and veterinarian care provided when necessary. There was also an army of skilled horsemen, including the boss hostler, his assistants, drivers and their helpers, grooms, blacksmiths, harness makers and others on the payroll of the circus to handle and direct the use of the animals for circus purposes.

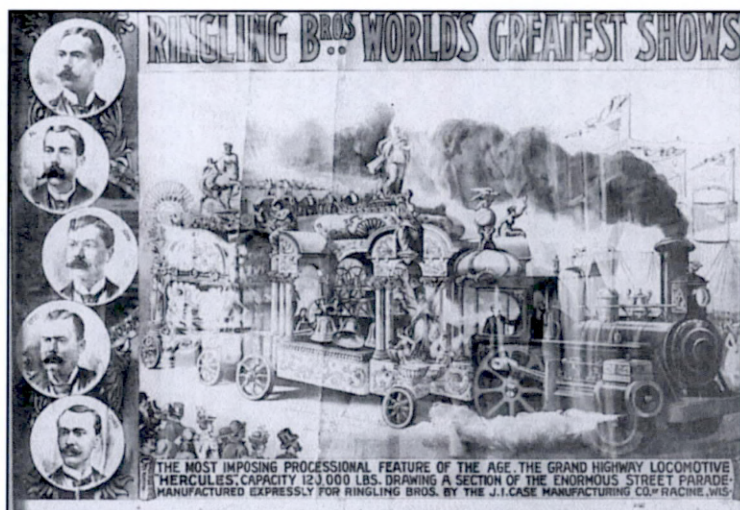


In the age of the horse there were limit-

The lithograph artist made the 1892 Case traction engine with the Ringling outfit look like a powerful road locomotive, but it lumbered along instead of speeding past. Circus World Museum.

ed efforts to replace it with a mechanical tractor. A self-propelled steam traction engine provided the steam to power the early calliope that was a feature of the Sands, Nathans & Co.'s American & English Circus of 1858-1859. The Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows featured a large J. I. Case Threshing Machine Co. steam traction engine pulling a string of cage wagons in 1892. Aggrandized in show publicity as the "Enormous Steam Highway Locomotive 'Hercules,'" the slow speed and heavy weight of the engine limited its usefulness on the daily moving circus. Another steam traction engine served on the 1894 Leon W. Washburn's Railroad Shows, but the "Steam Horse 'Ajax'" proved similarly problematical. Carnival owners such as Charles W. Parker and Con T. Kennedy later utilized

Al G. Barnes invested in five Republic trucks for his circus, one of which carried the Pneumatic air calliope in parade. They truly made his show different from other railroad circuses. Circus World Museum.



several steam traction engines on their slower paced railroad shows in the first two decades of the twentieth century. They pulled wagons and also drove the electrical generators.

Internal Combustion Moves America; Modernization at the Circus

Self-propelled conveyances were showcased as technological novelties at the circus shortly after their invention. Prof. Austin's Family Steam Carriage journeyed overland with both S. O. Wheeler's International Circus and Spalding & Rogers Great Ocean Circus in 1864.



The construction of the first successful internal combustion vehicle in America, the Duryea Brothers automobile of 1896, sparked a whole series of automobile exhibitions with railroad circuses. The Barnum &

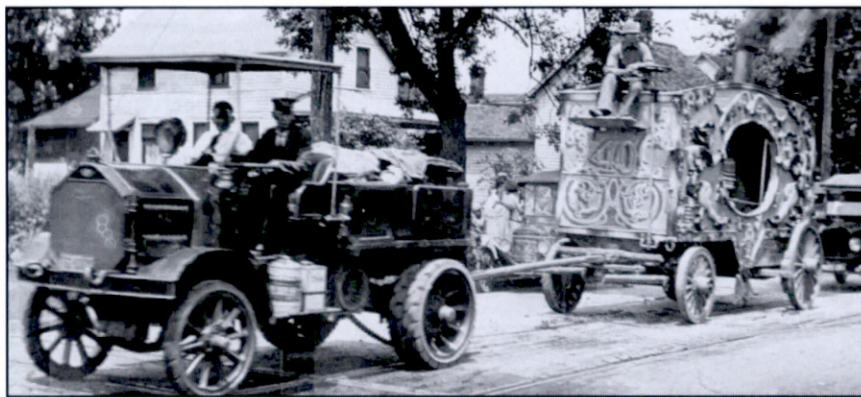
Bailey Greatest Show on Earth featured a Duryea in their daily street parade in 1896. That same year the John Robinson & Franklin Bros. Enormous Shows Combined carried a Haynes-Apperson. The Walter L. Main Fashion Plate Show claimed a horseless carriage in 1899 and in 1900 Pawnee Bill's Wild West carried something that they called the "locomobile" in the street parade.

A change from novelty to usefulness in the application of internal combustion vehicles to traveling shows was first achieved by a big wild west outfit. In 1909 the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Combined With Pawnee Bill's Great Far East built the locomotive of their "Great Train Robbery" train prop on a truck chassis. In 1911 the same "Two Bills" show ordered a

The Two Bills show advertised the presence of the show with this Martin truck that featured a large illuminated buffalo on the side. The side panels limited the driver to forward viewing only. Circus World Museum.

custom made Martin Carriage Works truck with its own generator that illuminated a painted buffalo on the side in electric lights. The same show had two Studebaker Brothers Manufacturing Company water trucks in 1913 that served to settle down the dust in the performance arena.

The Sells-Floto Circus staged a publicity trial or promotion with a



It was common practice to have the heavy steam calliope pulled by a heavy truck in the street parade. Here's a Knox drawing the Sells-Floto steamer in the 1920s. Tom Parkinson collection, Circus World Museum.

Studebaker truck and one of their elephants in 1910, but serious attempts to utilize internal combustion vehicles with a railroad circus commenced later. In 1915 an unusual three-wheel Knox-Martin truck, or "Velocipede" as Sells-Floto termed it, readily pulled three wagons that aggregated a reported 35 tons. The Al G. Barnes 4-Ring Wild Animal Circus featured four Republic Motor Truck Company vehicles as self-propelled cages and as an air calliope in 1914. A large bandwagon built on an American Locomotive Company truck chassis was added by the Barnes aggregation two years later.

Sells-Floto advanced again when they bought a conventional four-wheel Knox Motors Company truck with a cable reel attachment in 1916. It was the first of many four-wheel

Fordson tractors were a popular choice for show service. They served from the mid-1920s into the 1940s. This example was in service on Cole Bros. in 1935. Pfening Archives.



trucks that towed wagons on a daily basis between the railroad yards and the circus grounds during the next four decades. The International Motor Truck Corporation's Model AC Mack Bulldog, the truck most frequently associated with the circus, was first used on Barnum & Bailey in 1917. Autocar, Chevrolet, International, Pierce Arrow, Republic, REO and White trucks were also acquired by railroad circuses in subsequent years, but the Mack AC Bulldog proved the most popular choice of showmen.

Other types of outdoor shows also employed gas engine machines. Three railroad carnivals implemented the use of internal combustion trucks in the 1910s. These shows moved about once a week and had previously hired local teams for haulage from the show train to the midway venue. A truck from the Speedwell Motor Car Company was first, with the 1914 Smith Greater Shows. There were also three Sampson trucks from Consolidated Motor Company on the Jos. G. Ferari Shows that season. Seth W. Brundage extensively altered his personal Moline automobile into a wagon hauler in 1915 for his S. W. Brundage Shows.

Agricultural tractors were also tested and applied to circus uses. Though they were sure-footed in farm applications, they were not

capable of displacing baggage stock from the task of moving a circus on a muddy show lot. Two of the Ford Motor Company's popular Fordson tractors were with the Al G. Barnes show in 1923-1924. Two others were with the 1925 F. J. Taylor Circus and another served the Christy Bros. Big 5 Ring Wild Animal Circus in 1927. A would-be innovator in this field was International Harvester, which demonstrated the versatility of two McCormick-Deering tractors on the Sells-Floto Circus in August 1927. There was a Fordson on the 1935-1937 Cole Bros. World Toured Circus and the 1938 Robbins Bros. 3 Ring Circus. Three J. I. Case Company industrial and four-speed tractors were added to Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows in 1939. The Clyde Beatty Circus started with two tractors in 1946 and added a third in 1953. Their makes included McCormick-Deering, Case and International Harvester, mostly



Agricultural and industrial tractors were bought for circus use as early as the 1920s. They were best used to haul wagons between the train and lot, as in the case of this 1946 Clyde Beatty tractor. Harry Quillen photograph, Circus World Museum.

with diesel engines. Several railroad carnivals, including the Johnny J. Jones Exposition, similarly found these types of tractors to be useful sources of transport power on their midways.

Simultaneous with the implementation of internal combustion powered trucks on railroad circuses, the motorized circus was developed. Trucks and automobiles were used in isolated cases by overland circuses from about 1905 to 1912. Larger scale trials were underway by 1917. A boost came after World War I, when surplus military trucks were widely dispersed across America,

demonstrating their superiority over horse drawn equipment in every enterprise. The first completely successful motorized show did not become reality until 1926, after an expanded network of highways could support the efforts of showmen. The trucks that were acquired for motorized circus use were designed for lighter loads and faster speeds than those placed in railroad show service. Initially the straight-bed type of truck with towed trailers was utilized, but motorized circuses quickly began to favor semi-trailer type vehicles as that technology developed.



You could pile them high on a Mack and the truck readily moved it all. With dependability and power, the Model AC Bulldog proved to be the all time circus favorite. Howard Gusler collection, Circus World Museum.

Crawler Tractors and Traveling Shows

Crawler type tractors were developed for farming applications where the load of the tractor needed to be spread out over a larger area than the impact zone of a cylindrical wheel. Endless tracks proved successful in spreading the mass of the vehicle over even the weakest soil support conditions. The first successful crawler type tractor is generally ascribed to 1904, but the design and size continued to evolve over the next decade until the proper proportions were developed. It did not take long to learn that crawler propulsion systems could also deal with inclement weather conditions on a variety of soils, readily climb over uneven terrain and obstacles and move heavy loads under the most challenging conditions. It also offered the advantage of maneuverability, with a tight turning radius in restricted areas.



The earliest tracked vehicles to pull an overland show were designed and built by dog and pony show operator Holman H. Linn. He fabricated three different endless track type tractors to draw his show overland between 1901 and 1909. These were cumbersome, slow moving devices, based on steam powered automobile and forest log hauler technology.

The Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows conducted an on-site trial of a Killen-Walsh Mfg. Co. Model 4 crawler type tractor to pull heavy baggage wagons sometime between 1914 and 1918. Manufactured in Appleton, Wisconsin, the tractor burned kerosene and had a tiller-type front track that proved troublesome in trials and operation. The top speed was about half that of a team of horses. Despite the fact that it was specially suited to wet grounds frequently encountered by a circus, it was rejected in favor of the traditional baggage horse team.

The railroad carnival was the first type of traveling show to implement crawler type power. On November 3, 1919, several U. S. Army tanks with endless tracks pulled the wagons

Sometime in the mid-1910s a Killen-Walsh crawler tractor was tested on the Ringling Bros. lot. This print is the only known confirmation of the pioneering effort. Outagamie County Historical Society.

holding C. A. Wortham's World's Best Shows onto a muddy midway at the Waco, Texas exposition. It was the first time an entire outfit had been moved into position with tracked vehicles. A Cleveland Tractor Company Model H machine made an appearance on the James Patterson Shows about 1917, perhaps only as a demonstration unit in competition with an elephant. The innovative Smith Greater Shows utilized a Cleveland tractor sometime before 1921.

Caterpillar Tractors for the Circus

In 1913 the Stockton, California branch of the Holt Manufacturing Company, Inc. proposed a trial of one of their "Caterpillar" brand tractors on the Ringling Bros. show. They were advised that there was no room on the train for it. How differently shows might have developed had there been an extra ten feet on

Two McCormick-Deering tractors were field tested on the Sells-Floto Circus in 1927. Here they are entrusted with the task of moving the show giraffe wagons. Wisconsin Historical Society.





One of the first two D4 Caterpillar tractors was captured in this view pulling show water wagon #104 to the lot. It had a stake-pulling jib arrangement on the back. Circus World Museum.

the flats. One of the Ringling brothers, perhaps Alf T., apparently witnessed a Caterpillar tractor in action and dubbed it a "mud dog." The Holt agency in New York City offered the free use of one of their machines to the Ringling brothers in January 1914. Whether the brothers seriously considered the trial at their Baraboo winter quarters is unknown. The Ringling circus remained a bastion of the horse culture long after equines were displaced in other commercial applications. One of their spokespersons underscored the widespread circus philosophical commitment to the traditional baggage stock in 1918. They declared "The smell of gasoline would rob the circus of all its romance."

In mid-1916 the Sells-Floto Circus ordered what they described as a "caterpillar, like the French army was then using. It was said to go anywhere, being especially useful on soft lots." William H. "Cap" Curtis, a noted circus innovator, later stated that the track of the machine was not completed. That timely shortcoming may have prevented it from joining the show. The planned purchase was likely a Holt "Caterpillar," the make that found wide use by World War I military forces. The Holt firm and the C. L. Best Tractor Company were merged in 1925 to form what is today's Caterpillar, Inc.

The first documented Caterpillar Tractor Company crawler-type tractor on a circus took place on the Al G. Barnes 4-Ring Wild Animal Circus. A 5 Ton Caterpillar make tractor appeared at one of their dates in 1926, perhaps in a trial or publicity

setup with an elephant. The tractor was probably supplied by the firm's operation in San Leandro, California, during a show engagement in nearby Oakland. Gasoline engines powered these and all previous track-type tractors.

In 1937 baggage stock was still utilized in large quantities to deal with the uncertainties of moving wagons on and off of a difficult show grounds. Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Circus carried about 180 baggage horses in six railroad stock cars, cared for by 184 employees that occupied about four sleeping cars. Tents, blacksmith and other supporting ancillaries were carried on wagons that filled several flat cars. The Mack, Chevrolet and other trucks, of which there were nearly two-dozen on the show, were great for street hauling, but they did not have assured traction on muddy lots. Regardless of the long-standing tradition of the horse with the circus, the significant cost of baggage horses caused show management to investigate the use of tracked vehicles to replace horses and teamsters. In 1936 Caterpillar tractors were employed three times to move wagons on the RBBB lots.

John Ringling North, a nephew of the original Ringling brothers, wrested control of RBBB from the bankers in December 1937 and embarked on a broad plan to modernize the circus. In addition to performance and other artistic advances, two Model D4s and a pair of Model D7 diesel engine Caterpillar tractors were acquired from the firm's Philadelphia agent, Giles & Ransome in late May 1938. Simultaneously, 32 head of baggage stock were dropped from the show, and the stock car that had housed them was replaced with a flat car to haul the new Caterpillar tractors. The exchange rate was nominally one eight-horse team per tractor. Following their initial success, four additional Caterpillar tractors were added in 1939. The complete changeover from bag-

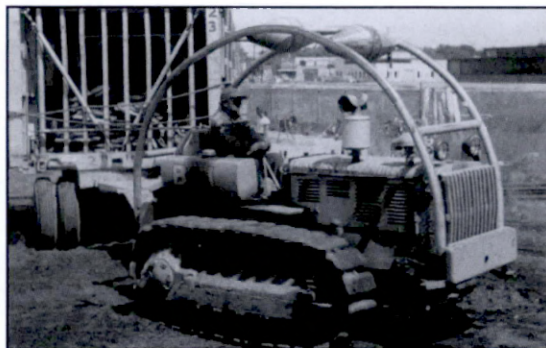
gage stock to tractors resulted in a 70% drop in manpower to move the show and a net decrease of ten cars, from 90 to 80, in the show train. To ease the transition away from horses, in 1939 RBBB instituted a Horse Fair that could be toured by the public. Eventually there were at least a dozen Caterpillar tractors with the show by the late 1940s. The circus had converted from horse power to horsepower to move the Greatest Show on Earth.

There were a few initial learning curve challenges with the Caterpillar tractors. Horse lovers vocalized their dismay over the dropping of the baggage stock, with commentary reaching readers of the *Billboard*. Some of the original operators, who had formerly been teamsters, did not always take kindly to their new charges. Because the new tractors were so powerful, the over-application of power damaged some of the wagons and kept the shop crew busy keeping them in good repair. The D6B, a pneumatic-tired version of the D6 that came to be called the "donut" at a later date, was found to have a high center of gravity. Combined with the elasticity of its pneumatic tires, it gave the machine a sort of bouncing and rocking operation.

RBBB was not the only railroad circus to recognize the advantages of crawler-tractor power. Until the era of the railroad tent circus concluded in 1956, crawler-type tractors were an essential and reliable means to move the biggest traveling shows.

Second-largest Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus added a single Caterpillar D7 with a protective wire-mesh opera-

This Ringling-Barnum Cat was equipped with hoops allowing it to go under canvas. Pfening Archives.





Power attachments extended the range of activities that could be accomplished by Caterpillar tractors. They made lifting bales of canvas an easy task, as this 1949 view documents.

tor's cab and a cable reel attachment in 1938. Cole Bros. Circus started using two Model D7 Caterpillar tractors in 1941 and used a Model D4 from 1948 to 1950. The big machines on Cole were equipped with lifting derricks while the smaller one had both a stake pulling jib and a blade for moving obstacles. Arthur Bros. Circus had a Caterpillar tractor in its single season of 1945, probably an example of the famous Caterpillar Model Sixty. Between 1945 and 1950, Dailey Bros. Circus owned three different crawler tractors including a Caterpillar Model Forty and a pre-war Allis-Chalmers diesel tractor by 1948.

Caterpillar Tractors Do More Than Move the Circus

The circus not only used Caterpillar tractors for pulling wagons, they were found to be a very ver-

Arthur Bros., a railroad show framed for 1945, had an older Caterpillar Model Sixty that was moved between the lot and the train on a special tractor dolly. Harry Quillen photograph, Circus World Museum.



satile machine that could accomplish a variety of difficult jobs with relative ease and great efficiency. Jobs that were formerly undertaken with large amounts of manpower were assigned to these powerful devices, some of which were outfitted with special attachments to extend their capabilities even further.

Two-horse pullover teams were used to load and unload wagons from the circus train flat cars. Caterpillar tractors could do the same job with ease, whether by moving beside the cars or using a cable reel drive attached to the back. A team of horses usually pulled a single wagon per trip, but Caterpillar tractors could safely pull an entire string of wagons between the railroad yards and the show grounds.

Caterpillar tractors that traversed city streets were fitted with rubber covered "street pads" to prevent damaging the road surfaces. Those that retained their steel cleats were transported to the circus lot on heavy-duty LaCrosse trailers specially made for the service. Several dozen horses may have been used to extract a wagon from its bogged down position on a muddy show lot, but a single powerful Caterpillar tractor made easy work of the difficult task.

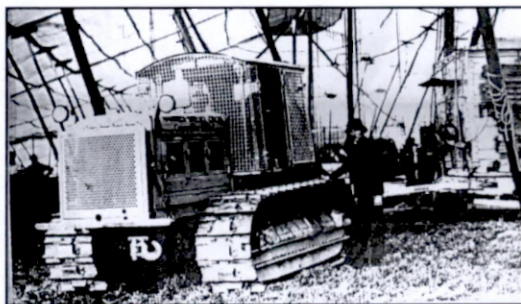
Spotting heavy wagons in tight places was an impossible task with horses, but one that the Caterpillar, which could turn around literally within its own length, performed with ease. Circus tent stakes were originally removed by a crew of men using a stake puller, designed like a lever on wheels. The addition of a Hyster spool and jib to a Caterpillar tractor made it a simple matter to extract the hundreds of stakes that anchored the canvas city to the earth.

Men, horses and elephants were typically used to raise the big top center poles but a large D7 Caterpillar tractor equipped with a powered spool could raise them with ease. The unusual

circular hoops above one Model D-4 tractor enabled it to literally plow its way underneath the laced big top canvas to one of the center poles. Once there, a cable was attached to it that enabled it to pull the top upwards.

Manpower was formerly used to load the large heavy bales of canvas that made up the moving city of tents. An extending boom crane attached to one Caterpillar tractor made easy work of lifting the heavy bundles into the canvas trucks. Bundles of heavy wet canvas for the many tops of the circus were readily dislodged from their conveyances by the use of a Caterpillar tractor.

Almost in anticipation of Tommy the Tank Engine, RBBB outfitted one D4 Caterpillar tractor with a steam locomotive motif for use in the show's 1946 "Toyland" spectacle. The most unusual looking Caterpillar tractor



The reason for the cage apparatus around the seat area of the 1938 Hagenbeck-Wallace D7 Caterpillar is unknown, but it surely offered driver security beyond any similar show tractor. Robert F. Sabia collection.

with RBBB was B-9, called the "Donut," a nickname derived from the agricultural tractor tires that were fitted to it. The Clewiston Motor Company of Clewiston, Florida devised the arrangement for navigating sugar cane fields. It was envisioned as a solution to the obstacles encountered in railroad yards during train unloading.

Caterpillar products were first painted with their unique "Hi-Way Yellow" paint in 1931. That did not stop the circus from exercising their long-standing tradition of changing things from year to year. In 1941-1942 RBBB painted its CATS green and then in 1944-1946 changed them to orange-red.

CIRCUS SEASON 2003



Frederick Whitman Glasier, American, 1866-1950, *Five Lady Jockeys*, Barnum & Bailey, Black and white photograph, copy from glass plate negative, Negative Number 1199, Collection of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art

PROGRAMS

Friday, January 10, 6:30 PM
Circus Celebrity Night, Sanier Pavillion, New College

Friday, January 24, Noon
Groundbreaking Ceremony for Tibbals Learning Center, Ringling Museum of Art

Saturday, January 25, 2:00 PM
Annual Windjammers Concert, Ringling Museum of Art Courtyard

EXHIBITIONS

Ongoing
The Greatest Show on Earth, an exhibition in honor of the
50th Anniversary of the Academy Award winning film.
Circus Museum, Ringling Museum of Art

The Museum's programs are made possible in part through support by the State of Florida, Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Support is also provided by the Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax through the Board of County Commissioners, the Tourist Development Council and the Sarasota Arts Council.

FSU RINGLING CENTER FOR THE CULTURAL ARTS
Ringling Museum of Art
The John and Mable

5401 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota, FL 34243 _ 941.351.1660 www.ringling.org

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOE BRADBURY

A Biographical Sketch

By Richard J. Reynolds III

EDITOR'S NOTE: The September-October issue published an epitaph to Joe Bradbury. The following is a tribute to him.

The Circus Historical Society ("CHS") and circus fans in general have lost one of their shining stars. Joseph Thomas Bradbury died of a cerebral hemorrhage in his hometown of Atlanta, Georgia on August 24, 2002. Funeral services were held at Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church in Atlanta, his place of worship for forty-four years. Services were conducted by Father Richard J. Morrow, who had baptized him and his wife, Frances, in the Catholic Church in November 1958. He was interred with full military honors in Arlington Memorial Cemetery in the Atlanta suburb of Sandy Springs.

To his brother and his brother's family he was known as "Jady" (after his first two initials) but to everyone else he was just "Joe." He was first and foremost a family man. He revered his elders and was devoted to his wife. She was the former Frances Thigpen, a native of Carrollton in western Georgia. The two were wed in August 1948 and, appropriately, spent part of their honeymoon on the Cole Bros. Circus in Virginia. Frances predeceased Joe in April 2000. They had been married nigh upon fifty-two years. They leave two daughters, Elizabeth Ann (Betty) Bradbury and Mary Catherine (Kitty) Glickman, born in 1955 and 1959, respectively, and two grandsons Josh and Jake Glickman. They were the lights of Joe's life.

For more than a half century Joe wrote about circuses, teaching and regaling circus historians and enthusiasts alike. He told of circuses past and gave detailed reviews of contemporary shows. His accounts were published not only in CHS's *Bandwagon* but also in *The White Tops*, the journal of The Circus Fans



Col. Joseph T. Bradbury, Commanding Officer, 449th Field Depot, U. S. Army Reserves, Atlanta, Georgia c-1972. Kitty and Danny Glickman collection.

Association of America ("CFA"), and *Circus Report*, Don Marcks' weekly circus news magazine,

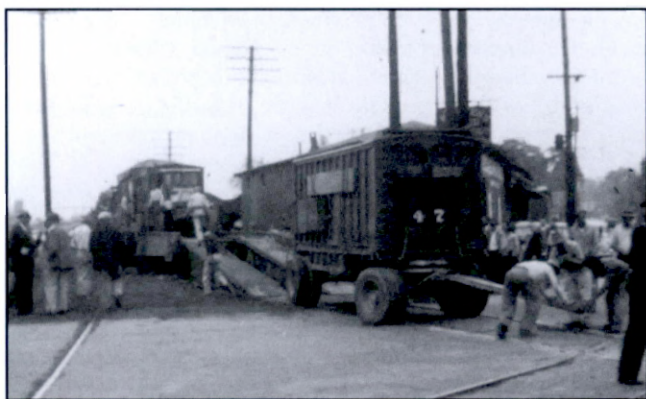
The first inkling of what was in store from Joe Bradbury came in the August 1949 issue of *Hobby-Bandwagon*, as CHS's publication was then known. It announced that Joe was compiling a list of extant historic circus wagons and wanted input from the readership. The result of his work, "Directory of Circus Wagons--Location of Wagons Remaining in United States," was published in the April 1950 issue of *Hobby-Bandwagon*. That same spring he wrote his first piece for *The White Tops*. Entitled "King Bros. and Biller Bros. Quarters," it appeared in the March-April 1950 issue. His last offering "Video Review" may be found in *Circus Report* for August 5, 2002, fifty-two years later, two days after

he was stricken, and three weeks before his death. During the intervening half century, his output was prodigious. No one has ever written more about the genre over such a long period.

Joe Bradbury was an intensely private person though very generous to those whom he considered his friends. To circus aficionados who had established their bona fides he was always willing to share both his knowledge and his vast collection of circusiana. Joe always shunned the spotlight, and for most of his life avoided large gatherings of circus fans and historians. Some even wondered if he was real. Fred Pfening III, the long time managing editor of *Bandwagon*, grew so tired of questions about Joe's reality that, when asked about it for the umpteenth time, he responded, "No, Joseph T. Bradbury is actually a pseudonym for my father, Fred D. Pfening Jr. (*Bandwagon* Editor)." The two were very close friends. To put the rumor to rest, a photograph of Bradbury and Pfening together was published in *Bandwagon* in 1991.

GEORGIA ROOTS

Though Georgia was Joe's real home, he was actually born in Tyler, Texas on April 24, 1921. Ironically, he was born and died on the same day of a month (24th). His parents were the Reverend John Thomas and Nancy LaBoon Bradbury. Both were native Georgians with deep roots in that state. His father's people resided in Douglasville, Georgia some twenty miles west of Atlanta. His mother's clan, the LaBoons, hailed from France. Their forebear Peter LaBoon (originally Pierre LaBon) came to America in 1778 with Marquis de Lafayette to aid in our War of Independence. His LaBoon descendants settled in Walton County, Georgia in 1827. Named for George Walton, one of Georgia's three signatories to the Declaration of In-



Ringling-Barnum unloading first section at Henderson's Crossing, Atlanta, Georgia in October 1947. Joe Bradbury photo.

dependence, it lies east of Atlanta, about half way to Athens.

Joe's father was a minister of the Christian Church, and his calling sent him to East Texas where he was pastor of churches in several cities. Joe's older brother, John Sholars Bradbury (1915-1999), was born in Orange, Texas. In another astrological quirk, Joe's birth occurred exactly six years to the day after his brother's. Joe would say that he spoiled Brother John's sixth birthday party. The two were very close.

The Reverend Bradbury died tragically in 1926, drowning while fly-fishing with friends. His young widow returned with her two boys to Walton County, Georgia. Widow Bradbury's father, Joseph Thaddeus LaBoon (Joe's grandfather), was a

Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto with Ringling-Barnum features, Sea lion cage No. 179 on Atlanta's Highland Avenue lot in 1938. Joe Bradbury photo.



prosperous Walton County agribusinessman. He had a thousand-acre farm near its Good Hope community, which had been in his family since 1836. He also had banking and textile manufacturing interests in Monroe, the county seat.

Next to the circus, Joe's fondest boyhood memories were from the summers he always spent at his grandfather's farm. His Christmases were also spent there, and they were as idyllic as anything enjoyed by John Boy Walton of network television fame.

Joe's mother was a graduate of the Georgia Women's College in Milledgeville (now Georgia College and State University). After moving back from Texas, she was employed by the University of Georgia in Athens, eighteen miles east of her LaBoon family farm. Today, that is a snap commute. In fact some university employees now live as far away as Atlanta, making a daily round trip of 100 or more miles depending on where they live within the Atlanta area. However, back when Widow Bradbury returned to her parents' farm with Joe and his Brother John, commuting between Good Hope and Athens was out of the question. For beginners, there was not a single paved road connecting Walton County with either Athens or Atlanta. In fact there was no real network of paved roads in Georgia until well into the 1930s.

Not until 1950 did the average Southern farmer have an annual income equivalent to that which had been enjoyed by his counterpart in Iowa a half century earlier! The ravage wrought

by the War Between the States was long lasting and followed all too soon by a series of devastating blows: financial panics, collapse of farm prices, the boll weevil plague and then the Great Depression. All of these events combined to make the paving of rural roads a luxury Georgians could ill afford. Essentially, for Nancy Bradbury to pursue her position with the University she had to live in Athens. So, she acquired a house in the "Classic City," so called after its namesake city in Greece, the center of classical learning in the ancient world. And it was in the Classic City that Joe would spend each school year. He received all his formal education there, graduating from Athens High School in 1938.

BELOVED UNIVERSITY

For Joe Bradbury the University of Georgia was sacrosanct, and he supported it throughout his life. He enrolled in the fall of 1938 following his Brother John who had graduated the year before. Like Brother John, Joe was also a member of the Pi Kappa Phi social fraternity. Joe was on the staff of the *Red and Black*, the student newspaper, and was business manager of the *Pandora*, the university's yearbook. He was a member of University's Economics Society, the Phi Kappa Literary Society, Sigma Delta Chi journalism fraternity (since 1988 the Society of Professional Journalists), and was on the business staff of the University's Italian Blackfriars Theater Group.

Back then the University of Georgia's student body was largely homogenous with mostly common interests and a unified outlook (typical of most southern colleges in those halcyon days). Dr. William Tate, a legendary and long tenured Dean of Men, faced few serious problems, at least in comparison with the present. During the football games in Sanford Stadium, Dean Tate would charge into the student section pursuing those who had smuggled in a flask or a pint. And he sometimes ordered the dismantling of a homecoming display considered risqué. Joe enjoyed it all --the fraternity parties, the rituals and thrills of Georgia Bulldog football games, and the big-band dances of that era.

As for the big bands, Joe said the best he ever saw and heard anywhere was at the University the night the students danced and swayed to the music of the combined bands of Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey with vocalists Frank Sinatra, Jo Stafford and the Pied Pipers. Joe pursued his love of such music by later joining the Browsers, a big band fan group. In fact the last piece he ever wrote about anything was a paper entitled "My Favorite Female Vocalists in The Big Band Era." It was published posthumously in the October 2002 issue of *The Browser's Notes*.

CIRCUS AND FOOTBALL

The Georgia Bulldog football team was as much a passion for Joe as was the circus. In fact there are many similarities between the two, particularly when having in mind the circuses of a half-century ago. Think about it! There is anxious excitement over the buildup. Folks all over town talk about the coming event. While circuses plaster the city with posters, partisan football fans post "Go Bulldogs" (or whatever) signs. Newspapers are full of advance announcements.

Both football games and circuses are field shows and both are held in arenas in which athletes demonstrate physical prowess to the tune of great bands and cheers from excited audiences. Both have pitchmen (hawkers of pennants, team paraphernalia, etc. for the football games and bug men, popcorn and cotton candy etc. at the circus). Both feature live animals, those at football games being team mascots like Louisiana State's tiger, Colorado's buffalo (bison), Baylor's black bear, or Houston's cougar. The referee controls the flow of the game and the ringmaster does so at the circus. Both use whistles. Both have clowns; those at college football games masquerade as team mascots pantomiming the audience with exaggerated gestures and body language, e.g. Notre Dame's Leprechaun, Georgia Tech's Yellow Jacket "Buzz," and Ohio State's Brutus Buckeye. And, for the past twenty-five years or so,

there have been clowns aplenty in the football audiences--those with garish body paint and psychedelic hairpieces who gesticulate wildly before the television cameras. Not even the Kafkaesque pretensions of Cirque du Soleil can top them.

The circus-football linkage was imprinted upon Joe, made more so by the fact that the fall football season coincided with circus and fair time in Georgia. Early Saturday morning trips to Athens for football (or to small town fairs, carnivals, or circus locations) were made through a picturesque countryside bathed in soft morning sunlight highlighting the autumn leaves. Anticipation and excitement filled the air, and Joe was really fulfilled--as though Christmas had come early. He loved to tell the story of taking Frances, then his girl friend, to the 1947 Georgia-Alabama game in Athens on Saturday and early the next morning being with her at Henderson's crossing in Atlanta to see the arrival of the Ringling-Barnum train.

Joe started attending Georgia football games in Athens while he was still in high school and never missed a home contest as a university student. After returning from the service in 1946, he became a season ticket holder and remained one through the 1994 season. In between he and Frances attended many contests played elsewhere, including bowl games featuring the Bulldogs. But, by the 1990s there were many changes that Joe did not like. Game day in Athens was now much different. Sanford Stadium had grown from 43,000 seats in 1964 to over

Joe Bradbury's first circus trip, Atlanta, Georgia in 1938. Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto with Ringling-Barnum features. Train below Highland Avenue bridge. Joe Bradbury photo.



85,000 in 1991. Though the crowds were now enormous, Athens had not made commensurate improvements in its traffic handling capability. Negotiating Athens on game day had always been a problem. It now became a nightmare with twice as many fans rolling into town. Joe's long time parking spot near the stadium was foreclosed. Worse still, games no longer began at 1:00 or 2:00 P.M. as God intended and tradition required but, instead, were set at any time throughout Saturday depending upon the whims of the television schedulers. So, after forty--six years as an Athens football regular, Joe hung it up. In fairness, the decision was prompted in no small measure by the fact that by then he and Frances had a second home in Naples, Florida. While it lasted, however, game day in Athens with Frances and Joe Bradbury was a celebration. For some thirty-five years they staged elaborate pre-game tailgate parties that were a treat for those lucky enough to have been invited.

YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW!

On May 16, 1942 Joe was graduated from the University's Henry W. Grady School of Journalism. The United States was then six months into the Great War. He was in the Army R.O.T.C. and the day before graduation, received his commission as a Second Lieutenant, thus commencing a long and distinguished military career. His first active duty orders sent him to Fort Warren at Cheyenne, Wyoming where he was an instructor in basic Army infantry training. Then, in August 1943 he was posted to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. There he became the executive officer of the 964th Quartermaster Service Company. That was quite an experience, for all its enlisted men were African-Americans. Joe was with that unit for the remainder of World War II.

On January 1, 1944 Joe and his quartermaster battalion left Fort Leonard Wood for England. First came a long troop train ride from Missouri to Camp Miles Standish, Taunton, Massachusetts. It was the

staging area for embarkation via Boston harbor. For that Joe and his unit went aboard the *HMS Britannic* and thence across the Atlantic in a convoy bound for Liverpool. Once in England Joe was involved with preparations for Operation Overlord (D-Day). Joe, by then a First Lieutenant, led his company off the landing craft, through the surf, and onto Utah Beach in Normandy. His telling of that story always raised eyebrows and at the right moment he would add "on D-Day plus 90."

In September 1944, Joe's unit arrived at Caserne Maistre on the outskirts of Reims, France, some ninety miles from Bastogne in the Ardennes. There the U. S. Army established the largest military supply depot the world has ever seen. The 964th's first assignment was to build a prisoner of war stockade at the huge depot. For the remainder of the war, Joe and his men guarded the POWs and supervised their work details. At its peak the stockade housed 7,500 captured German soldiers. Joe said that most of them were plenty glad to be there instead of the eastern front.

The closest Joe came to combat was during the Wehrmacht's Ardennes offensive in December 1944 (the Battle of the Bulge)-not very far away at all. When the attack began, the famed 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions were encamped in and around Reims licking their wounds after British Field Marshal Montgomery's ill-conceived and disastrous September airborne offensive in Holland. When the Germans smashed through our lines in the Ardennes, the 82nd and 101st paratroopers were rushed forward to fill the breach. That left Reims defenseless except for small arms carried by the likes of Joe and his men plus a few 50-caliber machine guns.

Part of the German offensive targeted supply depots and the big ones at Reims were vital to the Allies. On Christmas Eve, the Luftwaffe bombed and strafed Joe's unit and the rest of the Caserne Maistre depot. About 200 German paratroopers landed in nearby Soissons. There was much confusion but, in the end, Joe's unit was spared actual ground fighting, though they were prepared for the worst.



Joe's first camel ride in Tangier, Morocco in June of 1975. His daughter Kitty is at bottom. Joe Bradbury collection.

Reims was General Eisenhower's advance headquarters. It was there, at the Club Interallie, that Joe made the acquaintance of Kay Somersby, Ike's British secretary, aid, and "good friend." And, as everyone knows, it was at Eisenhower's headquarters in Reims, on May 7, 1945, that the Germans signed the unconditional surrender. That ended hostilities in Europe effective the next day.

In February 1945 Joe became Company Commander of the 964th. He was the only white. Under his command were three black officers and 213 black enlisted men. In August 1945 he was promoted to the rank of Captain and in September was sent to an army school in Oberameragau, Germany. Returning to Reims, he was named executive officer of the 555th Quartermaster Battalion.

HOMEWARD BOUND

With the War over it was a matter of Joe's awaiting orders for home to be discharged. That was done according to a point system based on length of duty, combat experience etc. Joe's number finally came up in March 1946. He embarked from LeHarve, France aboard the *U.S.S. Marine Shark*, a Naval transport. After a rough Atlantic crossing, it reached New York City on March 26. From there he went to nearby Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. Two days later

he boarded a 12-car troop train, six cars bound for Ft. George Mead, Maryland (to be dropped off in Baltimore) and the rest for Fort McPherson in Atlanta, Georgia to which Joe was destined. As senior officer on the train, Captain Bradbury was designated train commander. In its effort to spread Army traffic among the several railroads, the government routed Joe's train circuitously through Augusta, Georgia. However, that did not bother him, for he was an inveterate railroad buff. This gave him an opportunity to take his first ride ever on the Georgia Railroad out of Augusta all the way to Atlanta. On March 29, the train finally backed into Ft. McPherson in Atlanta. The next day (30th) Joe was done with the processing-out procedures. That afternoon, he left Atlanta for his home in Athens aboard the Seaboard Air Lines' Robert E. Lee. Because he was due ninety-five days of paid leave, his discharge did not become effective until July 5, 1946. On that day he officially returned to civilian status.

His discharge from active duty notwithstanding, Joe was committed to the U. S. Army and went into reserve status. He became a Major in 1953, a Lieutenant Colonel in 1961 and a full Colonel in 1968. When he retired in 1973 he was Commanding Officer of the 449th Field Depot. To Joe there was no higher secular honor than serving his country as a member of the Armed Forces of the United States. For him it was "duty, honor, and country," and so said the commander of the honor guard at his graveside service.

In August 1946, Joe went into the construction business in Atlanta with Ferguson Construction Company, and in 1949 he joined Concrete Construction Company. He served first one and then the other in management and financial capacities until his retirement in 1988.

CIRCUS EPIPHANY

Joe had no conscious recollection of the first circus he saw as a child but his mother assured him it was Christy Bros. in Texas, around 1923 or 1924. The first one he could remember was at Ennis on Wednesday November 11, 1925 when he was four years old. He later

learned that it was Sells-Floto.

However, what really fired Joe's passion for circuses were two shows that visited Athens in the fall of 1928. They were Sparks (with a street parade, no less) and John Robinson, particularly the latter, for he got to see both the evening performance and the magic of draft horses pulling the wagons through the darkened streets. The Robinson show was back in Athens the next year and provided more inspiration for Joe. Then, in 1930 came Sells-Floto featuring the kids' matinee idol, cowboy star Tom Mix himself. For that one, Joe was at the Georgia Railroad depot at dawn on Saturday morning September 20th to meet the first section of the circus train. Chugging double-headed steam locomotives pulled it slowly out of the mist across the long, high curved trestles that brought the Georgia line into the yards. Joe would become downright transported when recounting that experience. He was nine years old at the time, and it was a rapture that never left him.

All the circuses that played Athens were now on Joe's card. However, there was a notable change. The medium sized railroad shows were virtually gone, ground under by the Great Depression. The harsh times saw the proliferation of a new breed of circuses (which some considered much less glamorous and gratifying), namely, the motorized or truck show. Athens got a steady diet of them up through 1939. Joe saw them all: Gentry Bros. Famous Shows (a little dog and pony opera), Downie Bros., Russell Bros., Tom Mix, and Wallace Bros.

Highlight for Joe during the years of the Great Depression, however, were the two big railroad shows that came to his town, Hagenbeck Wallace in 1934 and the new Cole Bros. Circus in 1935. Both featured the then biggest star in circusdom, wild animal trainer Clyde Beatty. Both offered resurrected street parades, though much to Joe's dis-



Joe's first circus photographs were taken of Downie Bros. Circus on April 17, 1936.

appointment, Cole had to ax its Athens march.

It arrived too late and had a long haul from the train to the show grounds. But Joe did get to see the grand free street procession of the 1934 Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, probably the best ever staged after Ringling quit offering them in 1920. Joe said that his all-day stay on the 49-car Hagenbeck-Wallace show of 1934 was his greatest circus experience ever. Lots of today's septuagenarian (and older) fans also put that one at the top of their list of all time great circus experiences.

On April 17, 1936, four days shy of his fifteenth birthday, Joe took his first circus photographs. The scene was the Downie Bros. lot in Athens. He would take thousands more, the last at Circus Hermanos Vazquez in Atlanta, the month before his death. His fondness for circus photographs is manifested in the profusion of pictures he used to illustrate his writings.

Joe made his first out-of-town circus excursion in his freshman year at the University—to Atlanta in November.

Joe's last circus photos were taken of Circus Hermanos Vazquez in Atlanta on July 16, 2002.



ber 1938 to see Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto augmented with Ringling-Barnum features. [The name Sells-Floto was merely a title appendage, for that show had been extinct for five years when its name

was added to the Barnes circus in 1937.] When it came to Atlanta, it was a fifty-car show--2 advance cars and 48 back with the circus proper, evenly divided between Barnes and Ringling cars (24 each). Performance-wise it was a powerhouse show: the incomparable Cristiani riding act plus that of the almost as good Reiffenachs, the Concellos flying act, Mable Stark and Terrell Jacobs with separate lion and tiger acts, and Bob Thornton's trained zebras.

The biggest feature was the much-heralded gorilla Gargantua the Great, then in his debut season. The big ape, in his air-conditioned cage-wagon, was pulled around the hippodrome track as part of the performance (In Atlanta a crawler tractor did the pulling, replacing a team of horses that had done it earlier). Just before Gargantua passed in review, famed animal trapper Frank "Bring 'em Back Alive" Buck lectured the audience about the gorilla. Under his trademark white pith helmet, Buck spoke from a howdah atop an elephant in the center ring. With his visit to this show, decidedly Ringling-flavored by that time, but still legally the Barnes show, Joe Bradbury had seen all of the components of the American Circus Corporation as it existed in 1929. Not many folks are left who can say that.

CIRCUSES ON HOLD

Joe's World War II Army service put a real crimp in his circus seeing. He got his first leave in October 1942 and used it to travel from Fort Warren (Cheyenne) Wyoming back home to Athens. There he was able to arrange one of his wonderful football-circus combos.

First there was

Georgia vs. Tulane in Athens on Saturday, October 17th. He always thanked his lucky stars for that because it was his one and only chance to see Georgia's great Rose Bowl bound team starring Heisman trophy winner Frank Sinkwich. Then on Wednesday, October 21st he caught Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey in Atlanta. Up to now, there has been no mention herein of the Big One. Reason: The Greatest Show On Earth did not play Athens during the years Joe lived there. (It did in 1922 but at that time one-year-old Joe was still living in Texas). Joe was thus late (age 21) for his first date with the "pure" ninety-car Ringling circus. There is a qualifier because, as noted, he did get to Atlanta in 1938 for that hybrid Barnes-Ringling aggregation. By 1942, nay 1938, Joe's circus preferences were well formed, and he never did have the same attachment for Big Bertha as he did for the smaller shows of his childhood. Make no mistake; he relished the Ringling show—just not much as others.

Between Ringling in Atlanta in 1942 and King Bros. at Covington, Georgia in the fall of 1947, he caught only one show. It was Cole Bros. at Loveland, Colorado on July 25, 1943. Luckily for Joe, the show had scheduled Sunday performances when he could get away from his Army duties at Ft. Warren (Cheyenne) and drive the fifty miles down to Loveland. Joe and several of his fellow officers made an early morning getaway from the post. An hour's drive put them in the yards of the Colorado and Southern Railroad in Loveland in time to see the unloading. After a short time there, Joe and his buddies motored to the nearby Estes Park resort, famous for its food and friendly, unattached women. Some of his buddies would have preferred to spend the rest of the day there pursuing the pulchritude. However, they were in Joe's car, and he was Cole Bros. bound. They all went back to Loveland and enjoyed the evening show.

The 1943 Cole show marked the end of Joe's circus for four years.

Imagine therefore, his excitement over the scene he saw out the window of his southbound troop train, the one mentioned earlier that brought him home from Camp Kilmer, N.J.

The date was March 28, 1946. The location was the electrified main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad somewhere around Baltimore. Suddenly, on an adjacent track heading north was one of Ringling-Barnum's "Garden Sections," so called because they annually carried the animals and equipment to New York City for the opener in Madison Square Garden, this time set for April 4th. Joe thought it was the second of those sections. Whatever, it passed as abruptly as it had appeared, but the sight of those brightly painted cars and wagons were a sight for Joe's war weary eyes. He was struck by the unusual color scheme of yellow (flats



Joe posed with four former presidents at the CHS convention in Bloomington, Illinois on September 9, 2000. Left to right Fred Dahlinger, Fred D. Pfening III, Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Richard J. Reynolds III and Bradbury. Joe Bradbury collection.

and stocks) and red (sleepers and wagons). As it so happened, 1946 was the third of the four years during the 1940s when the Ringling train was so painted [They had also had that color scheme back in the early 1920s.]. Almost as big a thrill came in Augusta the next day. There, while still aboard the troop train, Joe saw parked on some adjacent sidings the flat cars and coaches of the Johnny J. Jones Exposition. That big railroad carnival had spent the winter in Augusta.

The year 1946 was a poor one for

circusing in Atlanta. Ringling abandoned initial plans for a two-day date. The Hamid-Morton Shrine Circus was the only show to play Atlanta itself after Joe got home from the Army. It was at the old Municipal Auditorium in November. However, despite not having seen a circus performance since 1943, Joe did not bite on the annual Shriners' offering. He did not care for it, unmoved by the fact that it had proved a big hit with Atlantans since debuting in 1943. In time he would change his attitude, and actually took in several beginning in 1959 when the Yaarab Temple brought the Cristiani show into the old auditorium. The Atlanta Shrine circus played in that venue until it was closed by the city in 1979. Thereafter the Nobles took their circus to suburban Cobb County where most of the offerings were under canvas. Joe saw a lot of those. His postwar circus draught finally ended on September 11, 1947 when he caught King Bros. in Covington, Georgia, 35 miles east of Atlanta. Thereafter, he seldom missed one that went through Georgia.

WINTER QUARTERS DELIGHTS

Joe had a particular fondness for the winter quarters of circuses. When Biller Bros. laid over in Athens, Georgia after its first season (1949), Joe paid it a visit. He was a regular at the King Bros. quarters in Macon, Georgia (90-miles south of Atlanta) during its glory days in the first half of the 1950s. In June 1950 he and Frances made a long trek though the Midwest, one of the objects of which was to visit the remains of the Cole Bros. quarters in Rochester as well as the Peru farm once used by the American Circus Corp, both in Indiana.

Another reason for Midwestern trip was to see for the first time the Al G. Kelly and Miller Bros. circus. It was a big motorized outfit that had grown tremendously in the years since World War II. Properly characterized as a wild animal outfit, it was the first motorized circus to haul a

giraffe, rhino (African black), and common hippo. [The first truck circus hippo, a pigmy, had been carried for a short time in 1924 by the Honest Bill (Newton) outfit and was later with railroad shows of the American Circus Corporation.]

Kelly-Miller's usual habitat was the high grass country of the plains states. It had not played anywhere near Joe's home base up to 1950. However, that year it ventured out of its usual territory and moved eastward into Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. This was an opportunity not to be missed. Col. William Woodcock was another reason for the trip. He was Kelly-Miller's elephant superintendent in 1950. More than that, however, he was a circus historian extraordinaire. And, Joe was eager to meet in person the chap with whom he had been corresponding about historic circus wagons. Another was *Billboard* circus editor Tom Parkinson, and Joe and Frances met up with him in Chicago. However, despite such circus rewards, ominous news broke while they were on the trip. The Korean War erupted. That made Joe most anxious, for he was an Army reservist and subject to recall to active duty. Luckily, those orders never came.

Of all his winter quarters wanderings, none touched Joe Bradbury quite like the famed home base of the Ringling show in Sarasota. He and Frances made four marvelous trips there while the big one was readying itself for its annual season--in late February or early March of 1949, 1951, 1952, and 1954. The best was 1951 when Cecil B. DeMille's Academy award winning movie, *The Greatest Show on Earth*, was being filmed there. They got in on some of the Hollywood excitement with movie stars and wannabes everywhere. Naturally, on each of his Sarasota trips Joe took reams of still photos and reel upon reel of movies. The exacting notes he made in the old wagon graveyard are an invaluable research tool.

A pall of depression fell on Joe in 1956--and many others too. That summer saw the failure of his beloved King Bros Circus with its daily street parade. Simultaneously came the mid-season collapse of

Ringling-Barnum as a railroad field show followed, in November, by the end of the Clyde Beatty Circus as a rail show. When the ball dropped ending 1956, it also rang out the era of big tops that moved by train.

Joe would never again enjoy a springtime voyage to Ringling's bustling Sarasota quarters. With its collapse as a big top rail show, he and Frances forsook Sarasota in favor of Daytona Beach on the other side of the state. It was at least convenient to a thriving tented show. At the end of 1956 the Clyde Beatty circus moved into new winter quarters at DeLand, just twenty-five miles inland. Sure enough, May 1957 found Joe exploring the winter quarters of that ex-railer turned trucker.

Having been away for six years, Joe finally went back to Sarasota in May 1960 to see the great show's gravesite. It was a bone yard of weeds and junk. Yet, amid all the devastation, he found that the old quarters were actually giving birth to a new Ringling circus train. It was a 15-car affair created out of the best remaining passenger cars off the old train (They dated from 1947). It would transport the arena version of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Greatly enlarged, that train still operates today--and not just one but two, a separate train for Ringling's Blue Unit and another for the Red.

Joe by the Great Circus Train in Madison, Wisconsin July 2001. Ray Gronso photo.



For 2002 those trains totaled 57 and 54 cars respectively.

At the end of the year after Joe's visit (1960), Ringling switched its winter home to the southern end of Sarasota County--to Venice, 16.5 miles down the road. From there it would make a dramatic comeback. And Joe did see the Venice facility during trips to the area in August 1966 and again during the same month in 1967. But, it lacked the romance and excitement of yore.

SOCIETAL RESTRAINTS

By the time Joe reached college age, he was a circus aficionado nonpareil. Yet, he was late in formalizing his fandom through the circus interest organizations. He did not join the Circus Historical Society until the summer of 1949 when he was twenty-eight and working on his circus wagon survey for *Bandwagon*. He was thirty-six before he became a member of the Circus Fans Association, despite having already written thirteen papers for its *White Tops*. He was a subscriber but not a joiner. At least in part, this may be explained by the culture of his era.

Joe Bradbury grew up in a close knit community. Its social pact defined which hobby interests were acceptable and which were not. One did what everyone else did and was expected to enjoy it. This phenomenon was no doubt widespread but nowhere was it more powerful than in the Old South. Entertainments were a diversion. They could be enjoyed but only in passing. They were certainly not the stuff of lasting intellectual pursuit. That was reserved for serious and productive matters, mostly centered upon earning a living in an acceptable pursuit (very important that word "acceptable"), providing for one's family, or for the betterment of mankind. "Doing my thing and to heck with what others think," was not a tenet of the South's social code when Joe grew up. Conformity ruled.

An adult passion for the circus was odd. Circuses were more for the enjoyment of children. Sure, there was an undeniable magic in them, regardless of age. Nevertheless, they were not held in very high esteem on the scale of refined interests. Circus folks were considered by many as a

low-class lot around which one had to be wary, as with all gypsies. Let us be frank. There has been enough written about circus grift in the pages of this journal (much of it in a winking and affectionate tone) to justify the public's distrust of the genre. Moreover, both circus folks and townspeople were mutually suspicious of one another. Much of that has changed, even in the South. What was once judged unacceptable is now applauded--or at the least there is a "who cares" attitude. But that is now, not when Joe came along.

In his native milieu, if an adult trumpeted circus enthusiasm, he risked teasing, abashment, or derision. Heaven forbid, he might be called eccentric. Some did not care, particularly those whose wealth or position insulated them. Joe was not one of those. So, around many of his friends, family members, and business associates, he more or less kept circus in the closet, as it were. For example, he had a first cousin, Joe T. LaBoon, about his same age. The two were childhood playmates. LaBoon was a very successful Atlanta business leader, becoming Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Atlanta Gas Light Company. Yet, LaBoon had no idea that Joe Bradbury was a noted circus historian until told of it late in his life. Bradbury was not alone in this. Lots of southern men shared his interest in the circus but only allowed themselves its enjoyment on a fleeting basis.

Some idea of the pervasiveness of this cultural constraint in the South may be gleaned from the rosters of both CHS and CFA of fifty and more years ago. Folks who grew up in the old South are notably missing. For example, the 1938 CFA roster reveals these totals for membership in the Southeastern States: one each in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, and South Carolina, three each in Louisiana and Tennessee, four in North Carolina, and not a single one in Mississippi. Compare that to the likes of Illinois and Indiana with 37 and 31 members respectively. Fifteen years later the

situation was little changed except for Florida where, by then, the influx of northern retirees and the influence of the circus folks based there boosted membership. But look at neighboring Georgia. It began 1954



Joe Bradbury (center) with Big Apple Circus founder Paul Binder (right), Richard and Delia Reynolds and Charles Hanson (rear) at Duggan-Maley Tent banquet in February 2002. Ray Granso photo.

with only three CFA members: Jack Martin in Athens, Julia Peck in Atlanta, and Frank Robie, a familiar fan to many who then lived in Columbus while stationed at nearby Fort Benning. And, both Mrs. Peck and Robie were transplanted Yankees. Native Southerners who enjoyed the circus just did not join the organizations.

LEADER AT LAST

As noted above, Joe finally signed up with CHS and CFA. He became a leader to boot. In fact, no one else has been as high in the governance of both organizations. He was CHS's President in 1964-1965, the first Southerner to hold that post. He was an emeritus member of its Board of Trustees for the last five years of his life. Most importantly, however, for forty-two years, from 1961 until his death, Joe was an associate editor of CHS's *Bandwagon*. Only one person has held office in either organization for a greater length of time. He is Fred D. Pfening Jr. who has been *Bandwagon* editor longer than Joe was his associate only by the measure of the months that have elapsed since Joe's death. As for the CFA, Joe Bradbury served as its Southern

Vice-President in 1961 and 1962. He was Chairman of its Executive Committee in 1962. His most important CFA office, however, was that of its Official Historian. He held that post for thirty years, from 1966 to 1995. That makes him the longest tenured officer in CFA history.

JOE'S STYLE

His circus writing reflected his schooling in journalism. He believed in getting the first draft right. Consequently, he did little re-writing. He used an old typewriter and had absolutely no interest in the computer. There is something to be said for the discipline and attention required to do it his way. Joe considered footnotes or endnotes as anathema. So he cited sources in the main text itself. He also used the main text to rationalize different versions of events or conflicts in the evidence when other writers would do so via endnotes. The *Billboard* magazine was his circus Bible, and Joe considered its pages as revealing an almost divinely inspired truth. Joe often used the phrase "according to tradition" (or similar words) to support a proposition, the source of which was obscure or apocryphal. Often such things had come to him by word of mouth or in a writing he could not locate at the moment. Essentially, he did not get bogged down and plowed ahead with his story. The result was a mind-boggling volume of circus writing, all of it copiously illustrated..

There were three primary points of focus--the history of circus wagons, reviews of shows, both present and past, and stories of particular showmen. By the early 1950s, Joe had become a member of a rather select group of circus wagon buffs. In addition to Joe, they included Col. William Woodcock, Tom Parkinson, and Richard "Dick" Conover, all of them now deceased. Their collaborative work is the foundation of circus wagon historiography. Joe was the one who really carried the ball. His lists of the whereabouts of old wagons published in *Bandwagon* (1950) and updated in *White Tops* (1953-54)

were a treasure map leading to their subsequent preservation.

Joe used a factual, predictable and formulaic approach. His reviews of contemporary shows mostly dealt with motorized field circuses he encountered in Georgia. After all, when he started such writing, the era of the railroad circus was almost over. These accounts were very much like what one might read in a *Billboard* review, except that Joe went into much more detail, particularly as to the show's physical appearance and its equipment. His love for circus wagons prompted him to say a lot about the trucks and trailers. He did not write in the manner of a hard to please theater critic. He reported the program but did not tell us much about its artistic achievement vis-à-vis accepted standards of excellence. Essentially, all circuses were good to Joe, though in reality their quality varied greatly from one to another.

The season-by-season approach to the history of a given show was a Bradbury hallmark. He tried his best to see that such was accomplished for each of the railroad circuses of his youth, and for which he felt great affection, including the winter quarters they used. The shows associated with the American Circus Corporation were particular favorites, e.g. Al G. Barnes, Hagenbeck-Wallace, John Robinson, Sells-Floto, and Sparks. He wrote a lot of season studies himself and encouraged others to do likewise, notably Fred D. Pfening III, the late Charles D. "Chang" Reynolds, and the late Gordon Carver. Of all his projects, the greatest were his season by season histories of the Cole Bros. Circus from 1935 thorough its demise in 1950 and the Ringling-Barnum show from 1933 through its "big top" end in 1956. The Cole story was run in *Bandwagon* while that of Ringling appeared in *White Tops*. These are encyclopedic works, quite literally, all one wants to know is there.

The season studies were written according to a rigid formula. First came an account of the pre-season work in winter quarters, then the actual framing of the show with complete rosters of management, staff, and performers. Joe never used generalities in describing equipment and

animals. Where possible he presented a complete inventory of all the tents (with dimensions), wagons, and animals, together with a loading order showing which wagon and which animal went onto which railroad car.

Then came the lead-in phrase, "The 19__ (fill in the blank) season had arrived," or words almost identical. With that Joe would inform us



Myth disproved--they are different people! Bradbury (right) with Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Sarasota, Florida festival, January 1990. Pfening Archives.

about other shows hitting the road that spring, describing domestic and foreign economic and political events likely to have an impact on circuses. From there he went into an act-by-act description of the performance. Then came a day-by-day account of all the ups and downs--storm, pestilence, whatever. He tracked the route town by town. When available, he would give eyewitness impressions of the show, either his own or those of others.

Joe's presentations had an innocent air about them. That is not surprising, for Joe was a very sentimental person at heart. He touched upon all that was good. The seamy and sordid sides of the circus were omitted or minimized. And there was an abundance of that--scandals, peccadilloes, villainy, corruption, and licentiousness, to name only a few. He would say, for example, "Old E.W. Adams (a 1920s troupier who lived in

Atlanta) used to tell me about who was having an affair with whom on John Robinson, but such stories do not belong in a dignified journal." He left the dark side to others.

As an historian, Joe is probably best described as a chronicler of the circus. He gave us the facts. The more academically oriented circus historian looks more to the why of its ways--its niche in, and refection of, an evolving culture. Joe did not care what elements in his psyche propelled him to the railroad yard on that dawn morning so long ago when the Sells-Floto circus train arrived. He just knew it thrilled him and inspired him to write about it fifty years later.

As Joe moved into the last decade of his life, new forms of circus were evolving, those with a thematic and theatrical idiosyncrasy and shows that catered exclusively to specific ethnic groups. Joe did not care for the more otherworldly of these offerings, particularly the radically different Cirque du Soleil. He never saw it save on television, assured all who asked that he would not go in person, and never did. It is probably an understatement to say that Joe failed to appreciate the counter-culture movement of the 1960s-1970s, including the so-called "New" circuses it spawned. In his last three years, however, he did attend and enjoy Barnum's Kaleidoscope and the Big Apple, both of them more traditional than others of the "New" genre.

CURTAIN COMES DOWN

On Monday July 22, 2002, Atlanta fans Ray Gronso and Gordon Taylor took Joe to see the Circus Hermanos Vazquez. Set up in the Hispanic section of town, its advertising was directed only at that audience, but its offering was a traditional one of lions, tigers, and elephants. Joe thoroughly enjoyed it. It was the last circus he would ever see. In summary, therefore, Christy Bros in 1923 (or '24) and Vazquez in 2002 were Joe Bradbury's Alpha and his Omega. In between he saw most all of the prominent ones and wrote about even more. So, to you Joe, we bid a fond farewell. We will not see your like again.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

JOE BRADBURY

(1921 – 2002)

Richard and Delia Reynolds

Rich, Lee, Ansley, Mary B., and Richard (V) Reynolds

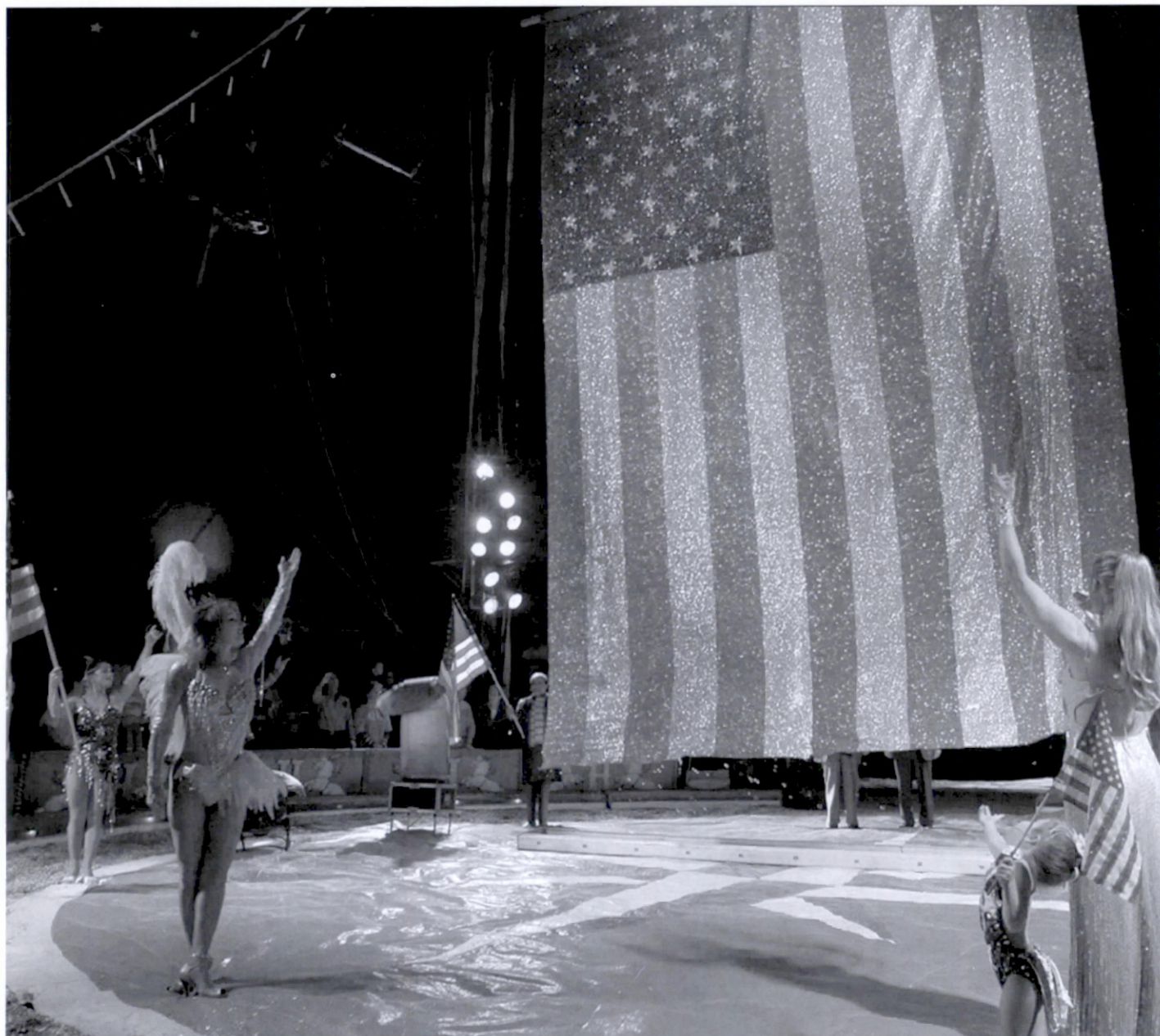
Michael Reynolds (Joe's Godson)

Tim, Deanna, and Ashlyn Reynolds

Season's Greetings

From

EASTERN STATES EXPOSITION



THE BIG € • SEPTEMBER 12-28, 2003

Wayne McCary, President
www.thebige.com



WISHES
YOU AND YOURS

Happy Holidays!

JIM ELLIOTT
GENERAL MANAGER



The 2002 CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONVENTION

By Dave Price

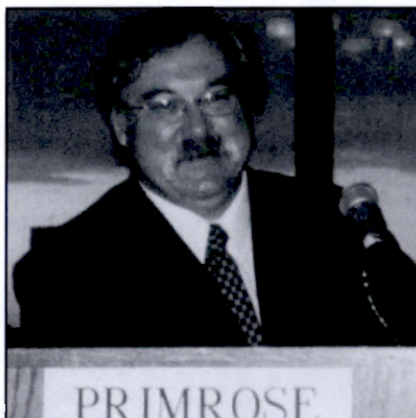
They came from California, Texas, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan for three days that turned out to be outstanding.

The group, modest in number but fervent in anticipation, assembled at Toronto's Best Western Primrose Hotel throughout the morning and afternoon of Wednesday, August 21, and began to register for our first out-of-United States convention, which president Al Stencell had thoughtfully dedicated to the late Waiter Tyson, our only Canadian charter member, who was CHS No. 2.

First activity, called "The Come On," was a tour of this fantastic city aboard the chartered "Red Rocket," billed as an antique trolley but younger than most of those present. Al was our guide and provided many insights not included on the standard excursion for retired teachers; all were amazed at his command of tidbits of the tenderloin. The trolley stopped a couple of times, was finally restarted. The exposure to the many ethnic sections of Toronto turned out to be of great interest to the group.

The scholarly, and we use the term advisedly, part of the convention began Thursday morning with what Al liked to call the "Reserve Seat Squeeze." Vice President Bob Sabia presided and the session was kicked off by Richard Reynolds' paper: "A True Herd of Giraffes, Barnum & London 1881-1882." As usual our immediate past president's research was both fascinating and delivered with eloquence.

Next came our hoary-bearded secretary with "Rome Wasn't Billed in a Day," being made up from his recollections of his days on the circus advance with particular attention to the logistics



President Al Stencell opening the convention. Ray Gronso photo.

of dating paper and the laying out of litho hod and routes.

Dr. Bill Lindsay, Ringling-Barnum Circus vet closed the morning session with a most interesting paper on the transportation of animals on the modern circus train.

The group again took advantage of Toronto's public transportation system and traveled to the Canadian National Exhibition grounds, the Conklin Shows having the midway.

After a time when all had the opportunity to walk around and eat

Boarding the street car for the Toronto tour. Fred Pfening photo.



lunch, we met at the tent of Bill Carpenter's Backyard Circus, where Bill and his assistant Johnnie Rice staged a wonderful circus of the imagination with virtually all of the children in the audience. Bill, a longtime professional actor and showman, then addressed our group on the philosophy and staging of his presentation.

Next we met at Mike Hackenburger's elephant ride where Mike demonstrated his techniques of working elephants and of training young African lions. Mike is the owner of the nearby Bowmanville Zoo and an avid circus historian.

We had much of the afternoon free to explore the "Ex" before gathering Ontario Place for Cirque du Soleil to witness the evening performance. All were very pleased with the show. Especially impressive were the rapid-fire risley act and the amazing juggler. Another outstanding presentation was the Russian swing number that finished with men jumping from one swing to another.

Friday morning's "Concert" was moderated by Dave Price and began with Bill Slout's "Prelude to the Great Eastern, Research in Progress," which was of course very impressive as is all of Bill's work. Steve Gossard, with some assistance from Al Stencell, read his very personal and touching tribute to Mickey King "Courage and Character: Case Studies in Will and Performance."

Bob Sabia next read "New Insights on Sparks Circus History," by Fred Dahlinger, who had been unable to make the convention this year, and whose presence was greatly missed. John Polacsek closed the morning session with "The Proposed Frank Buck Circus-Harry Baker's



Program presenters Steve Gossard, Dave Price, Richard Reynolds and Bob Sabia. Fred Pfening photo.

Dream Season of 1942," being a look at the correspondence related to a planned but never realized tent circus of the early WW II era.

After a lunch break, the hotel providing an oriental buffet, we reassembled as Al brought on an enjoyable mostly Canadian and mostly-showmen final program. Tried and true lecturer and Grand Old Showman Ward Hall debunked for once and for all the myth that the old time side show is illegal by reciting a series of court battles regarding this issue. When Ward heard the academic credentials of some earlier speakers read, he asked that he be given credit for having attended the Milt Robbins Academy of Dramatic Arts and the Dailey Bros. College of Business Administration.

Gary Cormier then entertained us with his many circus adventures, not the least of which involved the famous Jim Rose Side Show. Next was the energetic Giovanni Illiani who held our attention with details of the tragic death of elephant trainer Eloise Berchtold on the Gatini show at Sherbrooke, Quebec in 1978, and of his research into the long-suppressed outbreak of a mysterious illness on the Ringling show of some years ago. Giovanni is doubtless the only speaker we have ever had whose

Father Jerry Hogan, Ian Garden, Jr. and Dale Riker. Fred Pfening photo.



image has appeared on not one but two postage stamps.

Robert Hough, author of a somewhat controversial and highly fictionalized life of Mable Stark, "The True Confessions of Mable Stark," spoke on his research prior to writing his book. He told of his travels to various museums doing research on Mable's life.

When asked if the fiction part of his book might be mistaken for fact, he replied that he believed most readers would realize it was a novel and not a biography.

The Arnold Maley-Dub Dugan Tent of the CFA, as they have done in the past, hosted a pre-auction "Pie Car Smashup." Our thanks to Ray Gronso and Gordon Taylor for their part in this affair, which put all in a good mood for our annual sale of circus artifacts. Despite the relatively small attendance, we nevertheless increased our coffers by right at \$2,000 as auctioneer Stencell entertained with a running commentary on the material offered.

Al billed the Saturday schedule as the "Blow off." First item on the agenda was a bus trip to Barrie, Ontario, to see the matinee performance of Canada's own Garden Bros. Circus. Great show and Ian Garden, Jr. his liberty act and the two wonderful dog acts had everyone talking all the way back to the hotel. The trustees met during the afternoon with five members of the board being present this year.

About the last place you expect to get a good meal is at a banquet, but the fare served at this event was delicious to say the least. We were given a wonderful gift at the banquet as Dr. Bill Slout provided every person attending with a complimentary copy of his new book *Chilly Billy, the Evolution of a Circus Millionaire*.

The death of our old friend and past president Joe Bradbury had been an-

nounced earlier in the day and Al called on Richard Reynolds to give a brief eulogy, which all could relate to on a personal level. Secretary Price then asked those to stand who had belonged to the CHS for twenty-five or more years as he read off the lists. We had sixteen present who were in the various ranges from twenty-five up to the "more than sixty years" list which only contained one veteran editor's name.

Al had saved his long-time friend Sergei Sawchyn, the famous Canadian circus impresario, for last, and a wonderful banquet speaker he was. Sergei began with a recounting of his early fascination with traveling shows when he was a lad on the prairies of western Canada. He then went on to tell of his adventures in bringing over the Great Circus of



Al Stencell, Giovanni Illiani, Robert Hough and Ward Hall. Fred Pfening photo.

China (once featuring Gong Gong the Panda), the Moscow Circus, and of framing his own Circus Tivoli.

Sergei had cautioned that his story could not be told in a few minutes and even gave us an intermission, but I believe I am correct that every person came back and stayed until the end. Ward Hall was later heard to say to Sergei, "That was the most interesting, informative and comprehensive speech I ever heard."

President Al closed this final gathering with a plea that we "Go home so I can get some sleep," and seemed surprised by the standing ovation given him for his outstanding efforts in putting together this marvelous convention. We would be remiss were we not to mention Al's wife Shirley, who helped him with many of the details which made 2002 a success.

Long time CHS member Paul Ingressia later proclaimed this to have been the best convention he had ever attended.



If you would like one of our 2003 American Circus Calendars, please send \$3.00 to cover postage and handling.

GRAPHICS 2000 • 6290 HARRISON DRIVE • SUITE 16 • LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89120

SEASON'S GREETINGS

G. HENDRICKS BROS. CIRCUS

CIRCUS BOOKS!



CIRCUS & CARNIVAL TRUCKS 1923-2000 PHOTO ARCHIVE

By Bill Rhodes. These are not your average trucks! The wide variety of traveling shows modified their trucks for many special uses. These shows used trucks as tractors, parade units, tent reels, animal cages, ride foundations & canvas reels. Large, detailed photos include early as well as recent models, along with action shots. In-depth captions explain the use of each truck, including technical details such as the engine, make, model, etc. where available. This is a very unique book that both truck & circus/carnival enthusiasts will love. Sftbd, 128 pgs., 10 1/4" X 8 1/2", 120 B&W photos.
Item No. 10142 \$29.95



SHOW TRAINS of the 20TH CENTURY

By Fred Dahlinger, Jr. Show trains have transported mysterious cargo across America for over a century. Now the enchantment of show trains is captured for all to enjoy in this fascinating book. Rare photos display the unusual construction & exotic cargo of these show trains. Witness eye-popping traveling show cars including carnival trains, Dog & Pony show cars, Wild West show cars & more! Soft, 128 pgs, 10 1/4" x 8 1/2", appx 123 B&W photos.
Item No. 10124 \$29.95



TRAINS OF THE CIRCUS 1872-1956

By Fred Dahlinger, Jr. The magic of the circus trains is captured in this delightful new book for children of all ages. Rare behind-the-scenes photographs display the unusual construction & operation of these circus trains. Witness animals being loaded and unloaded from trains. Experience life inside the coaches that housed circus personnel. See flamboyant paint schemes, special length railroad cars, and rare builders' photos. Soft, 128 pgs, 10 1/4" x 8 1/2", 120 B&W photos.
Item No. 10115 \$29.95



CIRCUS & CARNIVAL TRACTORS 1930-2001 Photo Archive

By Bill Rhodes. Action photos of construction and farm tractors put to use by circuses and carnivals. Tractors were adapted by traveling shows to drive and pull stakes, load canvas and load trains among other uses. Included are tractors from Allis Chalmers, Caterpillar, Clark, Ford, IH, Harris, Massey Ferguson, Case, John Deere, Bobcat, Minneapolis Moline and more. This book will appeal to tractor enthusiasts and circus fans alike. Sftbd, 128 pgs, 10 1/4" X 8 1/2", 121 B&W photos.
Item No. 10169 \$29.95 Available Oct 1, 2002



ORDER TOLL FREE
800-289-3504

M-F 8AM-5PM CT Overseas 715-381-9755 Fax 715-381-9756
Send orders to: Iconografix, P.O. Box 446/Dept. CBW05, Hudson, WI 54016

ICONOGRAFIX ORDER FORM

Please send item numbers: _____

Check enclosed for \$ _____ (Include Shipping & Handling*)

Charge to my: MC ☐ Visa ☐ AE ☐ Expiration Date: _____

Account # _____

Cardholder's Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

*SHIPPING & HANDLING CHARGES are \$4.95 U.S., Canada & overseas call or fax for rates. All orders shipped 4th class Bookpost. All Canadian & overseas orders must pay by credit card. Residents of MN (6.5%) and WI (5.5%) please add your state's sales tax. Prices and availability subject to change.

CODE: CBW05

THE HANLON BROTHERS

Muscle Kings of Christendom

By Robert Kitchen

In the fall of 1859, James M. Nixon and W. A. Moore were in Europe to engage new acts for their circus to play Niblo's Garden in the winter of 1860. Word arrived that they had engaged Cooke's Royal Circus in England and the show would open in January of 1860. This show would create a bit of a stir since only two of the acts were English. Not that the *Clipper* minded that, since they felt that American acts were every bit as good as the imports. Their complaint was that the show purported to be something that it wasn't, an English circus. Two members of the Cooke family were with the show, Henry and William Jr. Henry served in a management capacity and William Jr. presented a pony act. Also sharing the bill and creating controversy was the man-maiden act of Ella Zoyara. Zoyara rode as a woman but was exposed as a man, one Samuel Omar Kingsley.¹

Opening night drew a mediocre review from the *Clipper*, but the only other English act on the bill drew strong praise from the reviewer. This was the act of Thomas Hanlon who presented a daring and dangerous act. It is this Thomas Hanlon and his brothers that we will examine more closely.

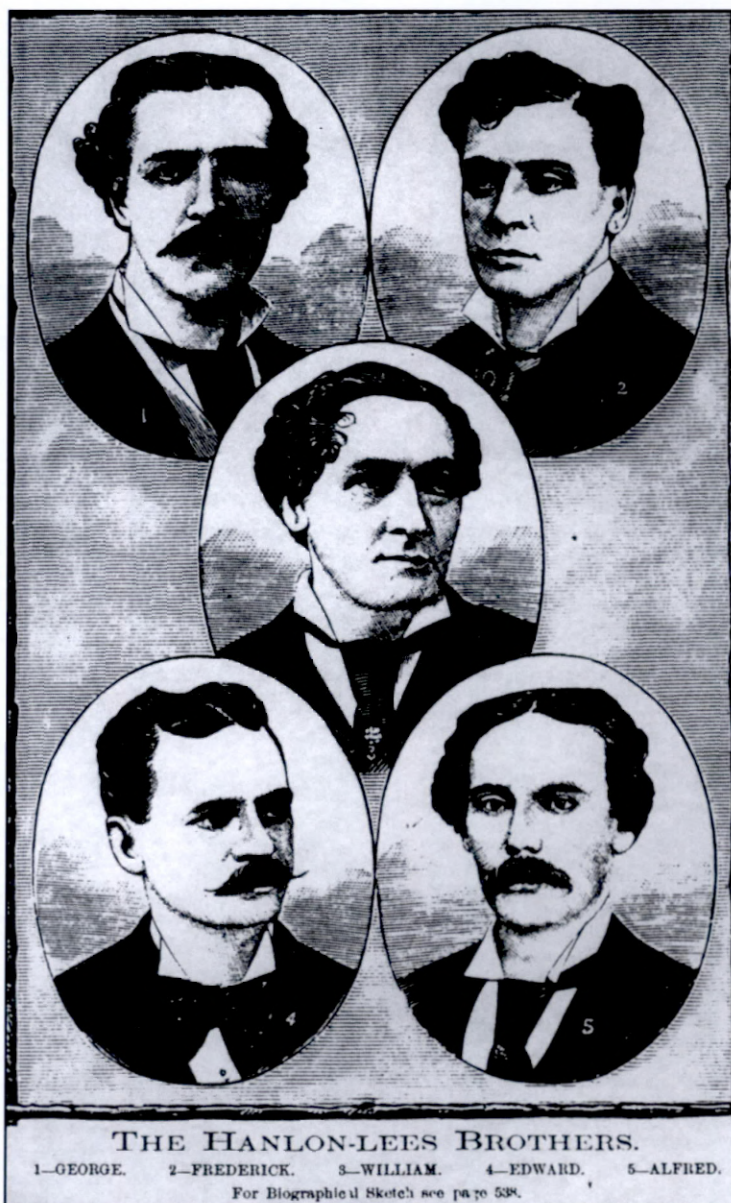
The story of the Hanlons begins in Manchester, England. Father Thomas was an itinerant actor. His wife Ellen was

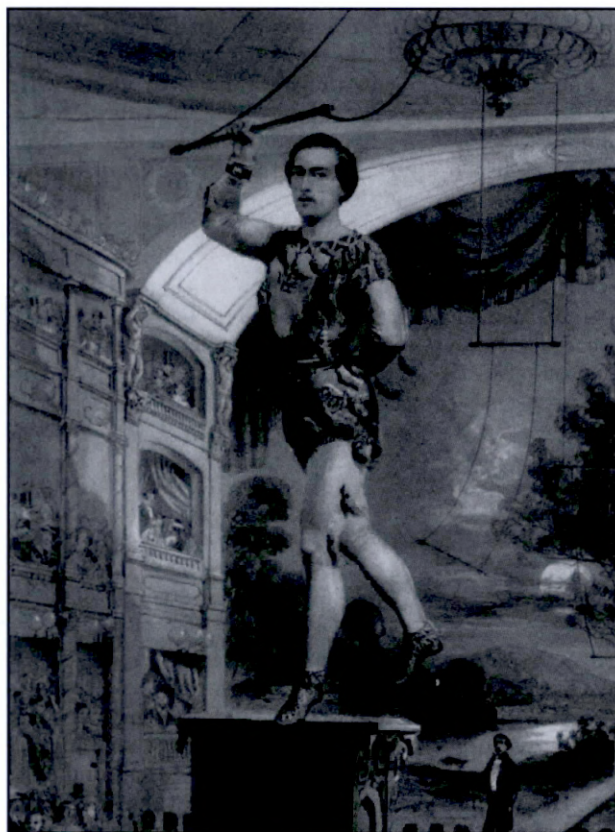
also an actress. Once married Tom and Ellen settled down to raise a family, and like most families of Irish descent, the children began to arrive with regularity. Tom took a job managing the Manchester Theatre Royal. It was this theatre background that most probably led the children into lives in the entertainment field.

There were several children, but our interest is in the six boys who went into the gymnastic field. There is some disagreement of the birth dates of the Hanlon boys. Information gets reported incorrectly and this often is then passed on in future articles as other researchers use this information. John McKinven in his book *The Hanlon Brothers*, clears this up by going to the original christening records to record the births. Thomas was born in 1836, George in 1840, William in 1842, Alfred in 1844, Edward in 1846 and Frederick in 1848.²

The five Hanlon brothers after the death of Thomas. *New York Clipper*, November 5, 1881. Author's collection,

From a young age the boys became interested in gymnastics, no doubt encouraged by their father. Older brother Tom was good enough to land a job as a professor of gymnastics and acrobatics at the Athenaeum in Manchester. George, William and Alfred were apprenticed to John Lees, a friend of father Tom, and an accomplished gymnast. The three boys were introduced to the risley act that had been developed by one Professor Risley in the United States. In this act Lees would recline on a couch and juggle the young and light boys





William Hanlon performs "Zampillarestation." Note brother in tuxedo whose job it was to set the trapeze in motion. Courtesy of the Harvard Theater Collection. The Houghton Library.

with his feet. This act was quite sensational in its day. Thomas senior put a great deal of trust in Lees and in return Lees acted as a second father to the boys.

December 26, 1847 found the Lees and the Hanlon brothers performing at the Theatre Royal Adelphi in London. The Hanlons were on their way to a long and successful career in show business. In honor of Lees, the Hanlons would later adopt the professional name of Hanlon-Lees.

It was decided to visit the continent and expand on their successes in England. They spent a short time in France and then moved onto Spain. Opening at the Madrid Circus they became an instant success. They were invited to parties and were asked to perform at special events, including a performance for Queen Isabella. One of their patrons was Eugenie de Montejo, who would eventually marry Louis Napoleon and become the empress of France.

The troupe spent some three years in Spain. From there they traveled the world including Gibraltar, Turkey, Egypt, India, Australia, New Zealand, Chile and Peru. This world tour would take the boys away from home for ten years and provide them with unthinkable adventures. They performed for Khedives in Egypt, Rajahs in India, and perhaps even for the harem of a Middle Eastern potentate.

In Australia they performed in a tent which they moved from one mining camp to another. Australia was in the midst of a gold strike

and miners were willing to pay anything for entertainment. This literally lined the pockets of the Hanlon-Lees with gold. From New Zealand the boys sailed to South American, first to Chile, then to Peru. From Peru they move to Panama and it was here that tragedy struck. John Lees came down with yellow fever and died on shipboard as the troupe was moving to its next engagement in Cuba. Lees was buried at sea. The Cuban authorities took advantage of the youngsters and they found themselves without resources and alone in a strange country. They leased the Tacon Theatre in Havana for a short time. They then moved on to perform with the Charini and Nicolo Circus in Havana. Here they earned

enough money to take them to New York and took a position with the George F. Bailey Circus. It was now 1858. They wrote home to tell of their plight and took to the road with the tent. It was in a western town that they heard a familiar whistle and immediately recognized the family signal. It was older brother Tom who came to the U.S. and followed Bailey's route to find his brothers. After a short term with Bailey, the boys returned to England. They realized that their turns were less appealing to the circus patrons in America than they were in Europe, Asia and South America. A training facility was engaged and the boys began rehearsing new routines. Younger brothers Edward and Frederick were added to the act. None of the boys were large in stature, but they were exceeding strong. Alfred weighed in at 138 pounds while brothers George and William tipped the scales at 115 and 128 pounds respectively. One reviewer dubbed them the "muscle kings of Christendom." Thomas and Alfred, being heavier, served as under-

Three Hanlon brothers, William, Alfred and George. Courtesy of the Harvard Theater Collection. The Houghton Library.



standers for some of the acts. In later years a former business partner and now enemy, claimed that the boys wore ribbed padding under their tights to make them look more muscular. Whether they did or not makes little difference as the facts seem to say the Hanlons were talented and quite strong. The boys settled into a training schedule and after eighteen months of rehearsal were ready to return to the road. The Hanlon-Lees were ready for another world tour. In France they appeared at the Cirque d'Hiver. The risley act was dropped and in its place a series of very difficult and dangerous turns were presented. It was here that they ran into Jules Leotard, who was just developing his trapeze act. This caught the interest of the boys and they kept a close eye on Leotard's new act. They would eventually add several aerial turns to their repertoire. From France they moved to Russia and again proved an instant hit. Some days they worked as many as nine shows and each show would feature the boys in thirteen turns. The authorities wanted them to train the army in physical fitness. The boys showed little interest in this so the authorities blocked their leaving the country. With some outside help they finally escaped from Russia and returned to France.

It was now time to invade America, but this time they would have a new repertoire of tricks to amaze and entertain their audiences. They arrived in New York in January of 1860. Under contract to James M. Nixon, they opened with Cooke's Royal Circus at Niblo's Garden. Thomas did an act called L'Echelle Perileuse. It was this act that caught the attention of the *Clipper* reviewer. Tom did gymnastics on a horizontally rigged ladder high above the arena floor. The ladder had a bent shape allowing the two end rungs to be used as trapeze bars. Tom would swing from one end of the ladder to the other performing various tricks. The act climaxed when Tom leaped from the end of the ladder, traveling some 20 or so feet through the air to a rope and then slide down to the ground. This was quite a sensational act in an era where aerial turns were not yet developed. It is interesting to

note here that Dan Rice in Philadelphia introduced not only his own version of Zoyara but also his version of L'Echelle Perileuse. The other brothers soon joined Tom to perform some of their specialties. These included Tom and George in an act called "parterre." The *Clipper* reporter reviewed this act on a second visit and his review said of Parterre, "This is a beautiful and astonishing performance and something never before witnessed on this side of the Atlantic. Their great muscular strength, and their lithe and agile movements withal, together with the grace and ease with which they perform each feat, marks the whole exhibition one of unequaled excellence and merit. These brothers are decidedly the trump card of the troupe, and must prove very attractive." Frederick and Edward did a "perch" act, while Tom, George and Alfred did a "pyramid" act. William did not perform as he was recovering from a 35-foot fall that he suffered when back in England. He would rejoin the act after a period of convalescence.

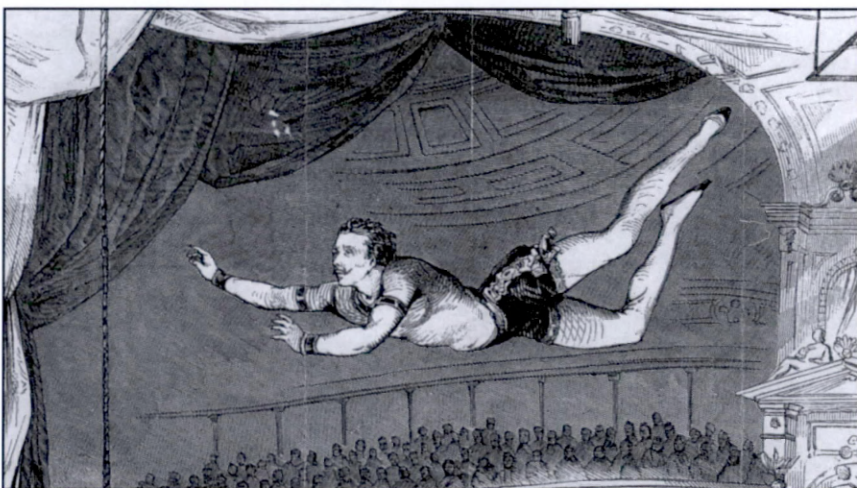
One interesting story that was reported was of a rather morbid fan that would attend the show each evening to see if Alfred would fall from an aerial turn that he did. Alfred fell only after the fan stopped attending the shows. While the boys suffered many sprains and broken bones they, for the most part, survived these accidents. One must remember that they performed without a net.

The show at Niblo's ended on March 3 and reopened in Boston on March 5. It returned to New York in

April opening on April 9. On May 14 William returned to the act performing in the pyramid turn along with George and Alfred. In this act the brothers would build a three high pyramid. At the proper moment the middle and top mounter would do a somersault. The middle man somersaulting to the ground and the top-mounter landing on the shoulders of the under stander. They would also tumble to the ground from a three high pyramid only to reverse the action and reassemble the pyramid. This had the effect of reversing a movie of the act. The author had seen this done only once several years ago by the Ariz Brothers on the Big Apple Circus.

At the end of May the showed closed, moved to Brooklyn and then the hinterlands, performing on some occasions using the Cooke title and on other occasions using Nixon's name. In the meantime, Barnum had engaged Grizzley Adams and his bears and decided to take the show on the road for the summer of 1860. He teamed with Nixon, and produced a show titled Cooke's Royal Circus with Old Grizzley Adams Bear Menagerie.⁴ The show would tour New England in the summer of 1860. It had a rather prestigious company including the riders James Robinson and Ella Zoyara, the clown Joe Pentland and the Hanlon Brothers. Yet the advertising would feature Adams and the bears with only one

L'Eschelle Perileuse as performed by Thomas Hanlon at Niblo's Garden. From *New York Clipper* February 1860.

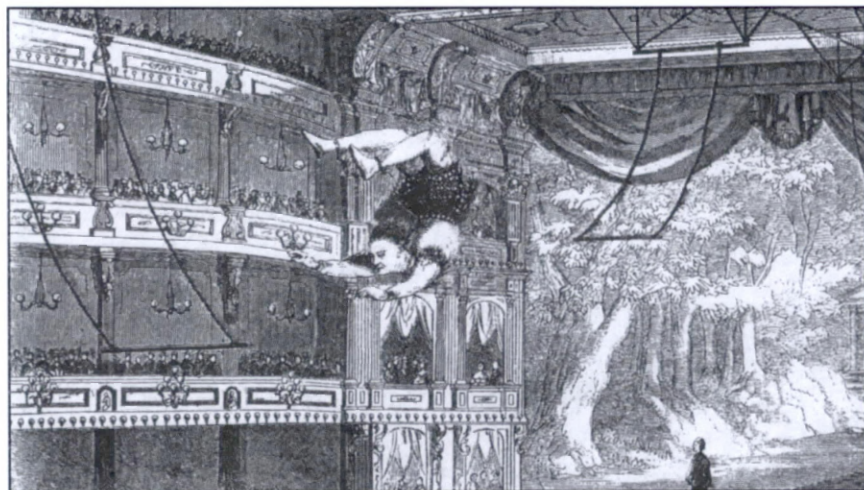


advertisement in Newport, Rhode Island that featured some of the other members of the troupe. One explanation for this might be the fact that some of the acts may have left the show to be replaced by others. The Hanlons most probably could not rig their aerial apparatus in the tent so were restricted to their ground turns. The show played till the fall and then returned to New York. From there they did a southern tour, but the Civil War would soon end the trouping of northern circuses in southern states. The boys did give under canvas performances to union soldiers.

On December 12 of 1861 the Hanlons opened at the Academy of Music. The advertisement in this article shows the many turns that the Hanlons did in this show. Also featured in the show was a pantomime troupe. This is interesting since in later years the Hanlons would gravitate to this genre and would be notable practitioners of this art form. It was at the Academy of Music that William would introduce his trapeze act which he called "Zampillaerstation." The *New York Clipper* of December 21, 1861 described the act as follows: "From the first tier of boxes, which is about 25 feet from the floor of the parquet, a standing place was erected, to which the iron ladder was attached. 20 Feet from this, in the parquet, an iron framework stood, from which

the first trapeze, or swing, was pendant; and 50 feet from this a second iron framework, with its accompanying trapeze. 30 feet farther the third trapeze hung suspended from the proscenium; and 18 feet beyond that stood the wooden framework, which formed the landing place of the daring acrobat. These several frameworks from which the trapezes were pendant, were all firmly secured by iron wires of 1/2 inch in thickness to the boxes on each side, in order to prevent any accident resulting from the giving way of any portion of the iron framework, which did not look strong enough, although it was so, to sustain the strain it was subjected to. Between the two stands, a passage was laid, consisting of a thickly carpeted pathway of the same width as the framework. By an ingenious arrangement, this passageway which, previous to the performance was on a level with the seats in the parquet was raised about 6 feet above the audience. At a given signal the Brothers Hanlon made their appearance, two of them being neatly attired in black, with white vests and kid gloves, the hero of the evening being splendidly clad in fairy like attire of varied colored silks. His manner so peculiarly unassuming, and his grace of movement attracted general and most favorable remarks, while his fine physique, and confidence expressed in his every motion, removed a great deal of that feeling of suspense and anxiety in regard to the success of the undertaking, that so frequently attends exhibitions of this character. After gracefully acknowledging the warmth of the

reception that greeted his appearance, William Hanlon proceeded to take his position on the stand at the dress circle, his brothers taking theirs by the two center trapezes, in readiness to assist him in his aerial flight. The first trapeze, or swing, consisted of two separate ropes, with a handle attached to the end of each. The others were connected by a bar, instead of having handles. Those handles and those bars were what the performer swung by, he holding onto them by his hands, his body being pendant there from. After briefly testing the strength of the framework by a graceful swing or two on the first trapeze, which at once convinced the anxious lookers on that he had everything under perfect control, he took his first leap, and as he arrived at the end of the first swing, he left it and catching the other swing as it was sent up to meet him by his brother, he was carried by the impetus of his movement to its extremity, and again passing thru the air, seized the 3rd vibrating trapeze and finally landed on the stand located on the stage, in the midst of plaudits that shook the building with force. The whole act was so beautifully performed, and with such grace and ease withal, that it took even the most sanguine by surprise. Again and again did he pass from one to the other, occasionally varying the performance by turning a backward somersault, and alighting on the passageway. Finally he took his place by the boxes for the last time: and taking the first leap he passed from one trapeze to the other, actually turning a somersault as he proceeded through the air, catching the flying trapeze as he turned. To describe the performance is almost impossible; it should be seen to be properly appreciated. It is unquestionably the most surprising, graceful and perfect acrobatic feat ever attempted, and we have no doubt but what it will be the sensation of the season. At the conclusion of the feat, the applause that greeted the daring performer was terrific, and he and his brothers retired to a whirlwind of approbation. The performance is not nearly so dangerous as it looks, and were the acrobat to fall, it is not likely that he would sustain very serious injury; still it is a very effective and wonder-



William Hanlon performing "Zampillaerstation" at the Academy of Music. From *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* December 14, 1861.

ful act, and as performed by Hanlon, eclipses that of Leotard, at least so we have been informed by gentlemen who have witnessed both."⁵ It took William about five seconds to cover the distance.

In 1862 the Hanlons went upon another world tour not returning to New York until January of 1865 appearing at Woods Theatre. After a brief tour they returned to England. It was at this point that the boys decided to break into two companies. It seems there was some sort of misunderstanding amongst the brothers. In the Fall of 1867 George, William and Alfred brought their company called Hanlon and Zanfretta Combination to America. This troupe included Alex and Josie Zanfretta, Mons. Chenat and Lina Windel. They were followed in a few months by Thomas, Edward and Frederick. At one point the two companies performed in theatres in the same town.

It was on this tour that disaster struck. Thomas was performing his leap for life at Pikes Opera House in Cincinnati on August 14, 1865. Thomas missed the rope and fell to the stage striking his head on the footlights. Bloodied, he was carried from the stage. Attending doctors found no skull fractures or broken bones. Thomas would continue on the tour, but would not perform the leap for life again. He worked irregularly as he suffered from intense headaches seemingly related to his fall in Cincinnati. He was placed in an asylum in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania where he committed a grizzly suicide, attributed to his intense headaches. Shortly after this the remaining Hanlons joined in a farewell tour. November of 1869 saw them still on their farewell tour performing at Tammany Hall in New York City. Featured here was "Little Bob" one of several apprentices that the Hanlons took under their wings through the years. In this act two of the Hanlons served as catchers as "Little Bob" was propelled from one trapeze to the other. The youngster was also caught by his hands, thrown up in the air then caught by his feet. This is a somewhat common act seen today. This act also featured an invention of the Hanlons, the safety net. Until this time their aerial turns did not use a net. The rigging in most

cases was not that high above the floor of the arena, but the new act had an element of danger not seen in the old acts. Thomas' fall in his leap for life and subsequent death must have also had a profound effect on the boys. It is reported that the boys took no royalties from their invention.

The Hanlons again returned to Europe and worked at the Folies Bergere. Here they were introduced to pantomime, a genre that was gaining in popularity. The boys could use their acrobatic skills in the presentations. It also required less strain than did their very difficult acrobatic turns. Their pantomimes would involve elaborate illusions and created a sensation wherever they were performed. The Hanlons would have a long and successful career both in performing and producing pantomimes. They would eventually build a studio to construct scenery in Cohasset, Massachusetts. For much more, including plans of their illusions see John McKinven's book on the "Hanlon Brothers."

Frederick and Alfred would both pass away from natural causes in 1886. The three remaining brothers continued with their pantomime troupe, eventually retiring from show business. They were indeed, one of the greatest acrobatic troupes to ever grace a circus tent or stage. They were at once innovative and daring and lent a sense of excitement to whatever show they were a part of.

T. Allston Brown perhaps gave the best summary of the artistic careers of the Hanlons when he wrote: "From the night of their first appearance in America their success was assured, as their professional attractiveness proved to be unprecedented. They at once took

their position at the head of the gymnastic list, and were with one accord admitted to be the best and most accomplished gymnasts before the public Old World or the New. All professional gentlemen of the gymnastic persuasion at once acknowledged their abilities, and the Hanlons were admitted to be muscle kings of Christendom. They performed seeming impossibilities of strength, quickness, and daring, that had never before been attempted; all being accomplished with a graceful ease that delighted the town and crowded the theatre nightly."⁶

End Notes

1. For more on Zoyara see *Bandwagon*, May-June 1993. "Will the Real Zoyara Please Stand Up." Robert Kitchen
2. McKinven, John. *The Hanlon Bros.* (Glenwood, IL) 1998. Introduction
3. *New York Clipper*, January 24, 1860.
4. *Bandwagon* January-February 1989. "Cooles Royal Circus With Old Grizzley Adams Bear Menagerie." Robert Kitchen
5. *New York Clipper*, December 21, 1861
6. *New York Clipper*, November 5, 1881

Season's Greetings

Dave Price

CHS

Secretary-Treasurer

STEP RIGHT UP!

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE



CIRCUS SIDESHOW CAVALCADE OF WONDERS AND CURIOSITIES!

James Taylor's **SHOCKED AND AMAZED!** On & Off the Midway is the world's only periodical devoted exclusively to the history of circus sideshow.

Presented by the world's greatest authority on sideshow, **SHOCKED AND AMAZED!** guarantees to faithfully recount the most astounding sideshow tales ever told!

Perfect for the collector and historian alike, we are pleased to have **three volumes available** for your edification and enjoyment!

The Best of SHOCKED AND AMAZED! contains carefully selected articles from all previous volumes and has added **never-before-seen photographs**. 270 pages, \$14.95

Volume 6 features the last interview with Percilla "The Monkey Girl" Bejano, Victorian variety performers and whale shows! 128 oversize pages, \$19.95

Volume 5 presents the Jim Rose Circus Sideshow and features an eye-popping exposé

on girl shows. Not for the faint of heart! **Mature Audiences Only!** 96 oversize pages, \$12.95

Ordering information:

Online: www.atomicbooks.com

Email: rachel@atomicbooks.com

Phone: 410-662-4444

Fax: 410-467-5686

Mail:

Atomic Books
1100 W. 36th Street
Baltimore, MD 21211 USA

(USA shipping: \$6 no matter how many volumes you buy! **International orders:** Call for shipping rates!)

**Take a trip to our virtual
midway (and sign up for the
FREE Net Freak Alert) at
www.shockedandamazed.com**

Frank A. Robbins

a most successful failure

PART SIXTEEN

By Robert Sabia

1913-I surrender dear-A clever title to a song made popular during the mid 1940's by such crooners such as Perry Como, Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby. This ditty of unrequited love sold millions of records to a public that understood such matters. Yet thirty years before, it had a precursor in the saga of Frank A.'s Robbins relative to his relationship with his first wife, Fanny. But there was one major difference from the song. Instead of love, it was based upon anger, rancour and bitterness; most assuredly Frank A.'s toward Fanny. His refusal to pay the court-ordered alimony had kept him out of New York State and therefore New England since 1909. The warrant for his arrest upon entering New York would have been cause for seizure of his circus and the possible forced sale of same. Because of his adamant position, Frank A. had to alter his normal routing and most recently been forced to play the new territories of Michigan, Ohio and Illinois, in an attempt to develop a new business base. The 1912 season proved that he was failing badly in this initiative. He had to get back to where he belonged, the Northeast. In order to do this, it was necessary to settle with Fanny, however unpleasant that may have been for him. In March 1913 he reached an accord with her and she, in turn, requested that the contempt of court order be vacated. The cognizant judge granted this request and Robbins was then free to return to New York and play whatever dates appealed to him. The matter was finally set aside. Right? Simply stated: NO! As we know, his circus was quartered partially in St. Louis and partially a few miles to the east in Belleville, IL. A major decision had to be made whether to dash back

to New Jersey early on in the season and then resume a significant tour of New York and New England, reminiscent of 1909, or to play a number of dates in the mid-west and then gradually get back to the East Coast. For whatever reason, Frank A. chose the latter course of action and this decision was catastrophic to the financial viability of his circus. It was as close to the watch officer on the Titanic asking: "What icebergs?" as Frank A. would ever want to be. As the new year bloomed, Robbins

was faced with a triad of options: To sell the show; to play out the season; or to prepare for the oncoming season with the hope of combining with other showmen who may have a reservoir of available cash and show property to commit to a new organization. He seemed to be busy on all three. At the outset he had to conserve what little capital he had left and if possible, augment it. In this regard he placed his menagerie at the Nugents Department Store in St. Louis. While it is doubted this action contributed to his coffers in a significant manner, it most certainly avoided the costs of feeding the animals and the employee(s) required to attend to them. In addition, Frank A. had to book his two marketable house acts, elephants and liberty horses, in the vaudeville and winter circus circuits whenever possible. He also decided to shrink the show slightly. It will be recalled that the 1912 show was on 15 cars. In 1913, his show would be on 13 cars, although he denied the show was smaller. In fact he claimed it was larger..

On December 23rd Frank A. wrote his friend William P. Hall advising: "Mr. Gehm (Venice Transportation Company) will write you direct about the cost of roof on the elephant car and the Burlington road will mail rate for wagons. I am figuring on ordering the flat over to the Burlington and load it Thursday of next week. Please let me know if all is understood and satisfactory. If cage No. 11, the one with the images on will go on the flat, will be glad to let you have it for \$150. It needs a little repair but the images and pictures ought to be worth that. . . ." It appears at least one flat and one elephant car was headed into the Hall

Newspaper ad used by Robbins in 1913. Author's collection.

THE ONLY BIG SHOW COMING THIS YEAR

Watkins, ^{Saturday,} August 30th ^{1913,}

Frank A. Robbins'

New and Greatest All-feature Shows



A host of Clowns that Cater to a Nation

Whose Inimitable Burlesque of Popular Games, Prominent People's Pads and Fashions Pools and Follies Make People fall off their Seats.

MOST SURPRISING BEASTS OF MANY SPECIES

In Cute, Cunning and Curious Antics to Charm the Children.

A Grand Free Street Parade 10 A. M. Daily

inventory for sale. Further, the flat would be carrying tableau and cage wagons that were also for sale. Times were tough and cash was scarce, and this was but one attempt to remedy the financial situation somewhat. After all, some money was required for readying the show for the season, even if it was to be sold.

In the *New York Clipper* of January 11th under the heading "ROBBINS-BOWERS-ROBINSON," it was stated "(a) decidedly interesting rumour reached us Saturday, 4, that Frank A. Robbins, Bert Bowers, and John G. Robinson may be associated together next season in a new circus venture. The unconfirmed story has it that the Frank A. Robbins equipment, now in winter quarters at St. Louis, Missouri, may be the nucleus of the new organization, Bowers and Robinson adding considerable paraphernalia, and the mating ready for the coming tour will soon be underway." Both of these potential partners were well known circus men. Bert Bowers was part owner with Jerry Mugivan of the Howes Great London and Great Sangers Circuses. Expanding this ownership to include an interest in a Robbins, Robinson and Bowers combine would be consistent with Mr. Bowers' ambitions. John G. Robinson was a close friend of Frank A. and was said to be considering a re-entry into the circus business as an owner of a railroad circus. But as it turned out, it was all for naught and the deal was never consummated.

While all this activity was taking place relative to creating a merger, there was much to accomplish regarding creating a positive cash flow and preparing for the coming season. Early in January the Robbins' stallions were in Chicago at the Hippodrome earning their keep and a bit for the boss. The Robbins' elephants were pursuing similar activities in the Windy City. And there were further attempts to convert any equipment deemed surplus to cash. On February 3rd Frank A. wrote to C. W. Parker, the carnival king, saying: "Yours favour received. I enclose picture of car. It was a stan-



Frank A. Robbins Circus lithograph used in 1913. Circus World Museum collection.

dard P.R.R. baggage car, 50 ft. body. It is the best finished car inside I ever saw, all matched ash faced. Has berths for eighty-four people, washstand and closets. The price I named that day is the very lowest, viz., \$400. Sorry the gentleman did not see it. I do not think that it needs anything but paint. Would be glad to let you have the car if it suits you." The letter speaks for itself. Painting of the show wagons was progressing at the quarters in East Belleville. As soon as this was accomplished, then the train was to be painted at the St. Louis quarters. Whether this train rehab was actually accomplished is doubtful because the same painting was done much later in the season.

Concurrently, Frank A. was seeking help of many types. To satisfy it he placed ads in trade publications. Of interest, in the formatting the ads, the circus was identified in large, bold print "THE FRANK A. ROBBINS ALL-FEATURE SHOWS" with a much smaller "BERGEN AMUSEMENT COMPANY, Owners." It is not clear why there was a perceived need to include the actual ownership body of the show but it was practically unprecedented with Mr. Robbins. Notwithstanding, it advised the world that the show would open in St. Louis about April 19th. It further noted there was room for "Sensational and well-dressed acts for Big Show. Anything odd, strange or curious for Museum and Side Show. Expert man or woman to lead Wild West: People of Advance and a Boss Hostler. No previous experience necessary. A sober

man of good address, who understands, men and wagons, will have opportunity for rapid advancement." Side show candidates were to contact A. L. Salvail in Chicago; advance were to contact J. Henry Rice in St. Louis; and all others were to contact Frank A., who was also in St. Louis. Mr. Robbins' frustrations in locating a dependable boss hostler are obvious. I have never seen a circus ad seek-

ing a department head with no experience in the circus business. I suppose that of all department heads, the only one that could be brought in from outside the business is a boss hostler. As horses were still the primary mover of the commercial environment, there probably were many well-qualified horse bosses out there. However, it is doubted if many had the responsibility to move significant property in a new town with different challenges every day. So be it. A couple of days later Mr. Robbins was writing his friend, Mr. Hall: "Would this man whose letter I enclosed answer for boss hostler. Any information you can give me I will be thankful for and the advice will be confidential. Don't think I am not attending to the pony matter. I spend half a day each week trying to fix the matter up." James Irwin finally satisfied the search for a boss hostler. The discussion about the "pony matter" and its resolution is not known to the author.

As the opening neared it became obvious to all that Robbins was not able to sell or merge his show. So the process of fleshing out the staff became paramount. This year there was a significant difference in its makeup. In recent years his family members had a diminished role in the operation of the circus. The exception was the multi-roles of daughter, Winona. She continued in this growth. For 1913, Winnie was not only her father's private secretary, but she was the press agent with the show, superintendent of reserve seats, and a menage rider of significance during the performance. She may have loaded the train at night but this was not so reported. Other staffers included Frank A.,

manager and railroad contractor; Ernest Cook, assistant manager; Clarence Farrell, treasurer (repeater); Milton Robbins, auditor (repeater) and superintendent of candy stands (repeater); John Henry Rice, general agent (repeater) and railroad contractor (repeater); W. E. Sands, contracting agent (repeater but new role); A. L. Salvail, side show manager; Frank Howard, boss canvasman (repeater); William Krammer, trainmaster; William Thompson, superintendent of elephants and animals; J. C. Kelly, legal adjuster (repeater); Arthur Keene, lights; Charles White, manager of ad car #1; Charles Date, manager of ad car #2 and for the most important position of cookhouse chief, Sam Ellis. Mrs. Mattie Robbins was in charge of the front door. Given the key observation points being manned by either family or very long-term employees, little misappropriation of funds by general employees could be accomplished with any degree of success. A final comment on the staff. It will be recalled that in the few previous years, we have noted the remarkable rise to power of Ray Anders, the youthful husband of Winnie Robbins. With the divorce of Winnie from him, probably toward the end of the 1912 season, Ray no longer had a role on the show. Not too much sadness there. However, old time repeater, his father, Frank Anders, also was missing from the staff. Sometimes the mixture of work and family does not work out for more folks than those directly involved.

For whatever reason, the show did not open in St. Louis as originally planned. The decision not to play this important city was possibly based upon the fact that the large 101 Ranch Show was there about the same time for an extended stay, and the very powerful Hagenbeck-Wallace circus was scheduled for an indoor stand at the St. Louis Coliseum. Unfortunately, prior to the opening but subsequent to the billing being completed, a flood wiped out the Hagenbeck-Wallace winter quarters at Peru, Indiana and with it, wiped out the opening in St. Louis. The Wallace Show stayed in Peru

to open several weeks later in that town.

One would think that the following momentous event would have influenced the routing of the show even though it did not open in St. Louis. In the *New York Clipper* of April 5th, it was announced that Frank A. finally reached an alimony settlement accord with his former wife, Fanny. As noted in the opening paragraph above, with this settlement, the Contempt of Court citation and the warrant for the arrest of Frank A. were withdrawn thereby permitting Frank A. and his circus to move freely about New York State and, because of this, his ability to access the fertile New England territory was re-established. With this wonderful news, one would think Frank A. would be literally prancing across Illinois, Ohio and Pennsylvania so that he would be first into many familiar New York stands and be back into New England early in May. Well, if one would think that, one would be wrong. He stayed in the mid west for an extended tour to his everlasting regret. It seems we may not be the only ones who could perceive the wisdom of quickly regaining New York and New England. John Henry Rice, the long-standing general agent, left the show, even prior to the opening date. Although there is no known information as to the cause of his departure, it is not unreasonable to suspect it related to routing the show; John Henry Rice being strongly in favour of heading east immediately and Frank A. having other ideas. Guess whose name

The Hagenbeck-Wallace Peru winter quarters under water in the flood of 1913. Pfening Archives.



was on the wagons and therefore won the debate, and guess who left? So here we are, just prior to the opening and we do not have a general agent on board. While Frank A. was certainly capable of acting in that capacity, he had too much to do back on the show. As such, the advance suffered until Ab. Scott came on board in late May. By then, a fair amount of damage was sustained and more was to come.

As noted above, the week or so playing various lots about St. Louis was cancelled resulting in delaying the planned opening date by ten days or so. The location selected for this auspicious event was Collinsville, Illinois (4/28), but a few miles north of the alter-quarters of Bellsville, Illinois. There, a good start was experienced commencing with the parade down Main Street. In a town of 9,000, there seemed to be far in excess of that number to watch the season's kick-off parade. Son Milton Robbins led the assembled masses in a carriage pulled by sister Winnie's spirited horse, "Ned."

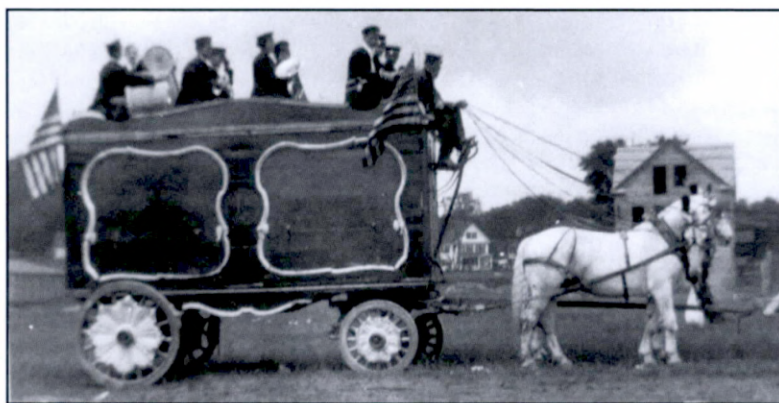
The large bandwagon followed which contained Professor Kern's 12-piece band, dressed in bright red and black new uniforms. Boss hostler, James Irwin, then drove a pure white buggy pulled by an equally pure white stallion. Immediately behind was a troupe of male couriers in white uniforms trimmed in gold braiding and silver buttons. The couriers all wore helmets. Several carved wagons were followed by a herd of Shetland ponies much to the joy of children along the line of march. The youngsters probably were a bit squeamish when the snake den passed with May Coleman within, who was really wrapped up in her career. More carved wagons and then Miss Yorke on her beautiful horse, "Harry." She wore a black velvet costume, which was trimmed in white and green. Professor Eastman's side show band of 10 pieces came next, high upon another bandwagon. Cavorting clowns in Roman chariots created merriment and pandemonium. More carved wagons were in the trek including a cage containing fine

specimens of lions and leopards. Elephants and camels closed the proceedings. There wasn't any mention of a caliope. All in all, a splendid march.

On the lot, one's initial exposure to circusdom was the side show barkers claiming the interiors of their tent held wonders never before seen in Collinsville. Manager A. L. Salvail had assembled a mighty array of talent including his wife, Mme. Salvail in mind-reading and fortune telling; Mlle. Alberine and LaBelle Asia with body movements that would challenge today's hard rock dancers; Harry Molton, ventriloquist; May Coleman, with charmed snakes; Al. Nuttle, the musical nut; Prince Yellow Boy, sword swallowing; Eastman's Colored Minstrels; and Professor A. L. Salvail himself, performing feats of magic that were no less than amazing. Not too surprising, the blowoff was the return of the Oriental dancers, who left little to the already vivid imagination of the heavily populated male audience.

The big top tickets were sold at 50 cents and reserve seats another 25 cents. Once purchased, the tickets permitted entry into the menagerie containing many different jungle beasts. In the menagerie tent son Milton had his candy stands replete with red lemonade and varied sweets. A few additional steps took the patron into the big top (a 120 footer with two 30's and one 50). It sat about 3,000 surrounding three rings handsomely decorated in the usual American colors. Henry Kern and his band of 12 played many ragtime songs prior to the opening whistle. Of interest, Mr. Kern had in his band his wife, Flora, who played a Sousaphone, and his daughter, Mildred, who played a baritone. Daughter Mildred later married son Milton, their meeting was one of the few good things that occurred that season.

Joseph Berris was the equestrian director and upon his blowing of the whistle, the 1913 season began with



This former Carl Hagenbeck tableau was acquired by Robbins in the Danny Robinson equipment purchase. Circus World Museum collection.

the following program presented. Display #1. - Tournament, including the entire company of performers and animals. #2. - Equestrians in white suits and silver helmets riding jet-black horses. #3. - Cart riding act and equestrian feats by the Hocum Family in white and pink. Little Lucile Hocum received much applause for her top mounting. #4. Clowns led by Harry Clark. The rest of the rioters included Horace Laird, J. Gibbons George, Harry Heining, George Vanderberg and 5-year-old Ray Hocum. #5. - Roman rings by The Slikers in lilac and white costumes (Ring 1); Mr. Wick in a green costume (Ring 2); and Miss Kula Yorke in pink and green costume (Ring 3). #6. - Another clown contrivance. #7. - Trained elephants presented by Archie Dunlap. #8. - More clowns. #9. - Pole and ladder balancing act by the Morey Brothers in all white costumes. #10. - Clown mule riding act with Harry Clark in the saddle. #11. - Swing perch act by Horace Laird and Frances Morey, in all white costumes. #12. - Tight-wire act by the Hocum Family in gold costumes embellished with cardinal and green trimming (Ring 1). Slack-wire act by Bessie Lane in black and silver costume, changing to an all-white costume during the act (Ring 2). #13. - Clowns with a trained giraffe act. #14. - Double trapeze acts with the Aerial Slikers in cardinal colors (Ring 1), Monroe Heining in purple colors (Ring 2), and the Aerial Yorkes in yellow colors (Ring 2). #15. - Menage act including Joseph Berris (apparently naked as no costume was

mentioned), Miss Nola Satterfield in a yellow and white costume, and Miss Winona Robbins in a black velvet costume embellished with copper butterflies and mandarin plume. #16. Single trapeze by Horace Laird in a lilac colored costume (Ring 1). Double swinging trapeze by The Slikers wearing green costumes (Ring 2). Roman rings by Bessie Boyer in a white costume (Ring 3). #17. - Comedy equestrian act by clown Harry Clark with a Shetland pony and mule. #18. - Swinging ladder by Bessie Gregory in a deep red costume. #19. - Serpentine in mid-air by Miss Kula Yorke, swinging by her teeth and changing costumes four times. As a final, George Vanderberg presented the trained black stallions in a powerful finish. He wore a tuxedo. A concert presenting wild west features followed. It was noted that Francis Morey fell to the ground during the perch act. Although it appeared that a serious injury resulted, he was back at it during the evening performance. The customers departed fully satisfied. They had seen a very professional, well-orchestrated program. The costuming was very colorful and wonderfully matched. The type of aerial acts displayed complemented by the horsemanship were typical of the times. The totality of the displays represented a first-class circus in all regards and was appreciated as such.

With this successful opening the train of 3 stocks, 6 flats and 3 coaches headed east as if on a beeline in the direction of Terre Haute, Indiana. With relatively short runs of 35 miles or less, county seat dates of Greenville, Vandalia and Effingham were played with O. K. results. Frank A. was early in at each town. Casey (5/2) was the furthest east the show reached in this routing, and then backtracking commenced. Altamont (5/3) only a few miles from Effingham was scheduled, followed by a Sunday ride of about 50 miles to Taylorville, another county seat. Business continued fair.

Closing out this brief Illinois tour was Stauton (5/6). So far not so good, not so bad.

Both the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers were transversed en route to the next date, St. Charles, MO (5/7). This town is now a northern suburb of St. Louis. Business and the weather were no better. By May 9th the Show reached the large town of Colombia, midway between St. Louis and Kansas City, and then turned north, gaining Macon on Monday (5/12). Nothing was being reported in the trade journals, which is never a good sign. Weather remained cold and rainy, not particularly unexpected for that time of year in mid America. Frank A. could not have been a happy camper. Perhaps Iowa would provide the desired answer. And perhaps not.

Iowa was fairly addressed by the show being entered at Moulton (5/14), straight up the center of the State to Albert Lea, Minnesota (5/20), and then a westerly thrust to the Missouri River, which forms the western border of the Show Me State at Onawa (5/27). A reverse in direction took the show to the exiting point at Mount Vernon (6/4), about 50 miles from Illinois. There were a total of 18 dates in Iowa. And business? Let Frank A. tell the story, as only he would know. In a letter to William Hall in late October, Frank A. stated "... (s)how business in the west is a joke. I can send one man and put up 200 window lithographs and pull on any vacant lot here (New Jersey) and get more than the biggest day in Iowa. The total payout would not be over \$125." Enough said. The show was in real trouble and was in desperate need of revenue. As later seen, our hero was borrowing money from all possible sources, running up debts that would be difficult to satisfy in any circumstance and impossible in a prolonged drought of customers. He had to get to nirvana and get there pronto. In this case, nirvana was clearly spelled NEW YORK!

It seems that by this time Robbins was finally listening to his pocketbook rather than his heart but he still had one last chance to market his show to those who may never have seen it in action. Crossing the Mississippi again, this

time in an easterly direction, the show played at two county seats, Morrison (6/5) and Sycamore (6/6). These northern Illinois towns were visited in cold weather, not a particularly good environment for a circus. The very brief Illinois tour culminated at Oak Park, only a few miles from the center of Chicago. There Frank A. invited the elite showmen from the Chicago area to visit, enjoy, and hopefully touch and feel. Unfortunately the weather was still not cooperating. It was very cold with the temperature hovering around forty degrees. As such some of the showmen stayed away as did many of the locals. However, those that did come enjoyed the performance throughout but there were no buyers in the audience. Meanwhile in a short article in *The New York Clipper*, it was stated that Mr. Robbins vigorously denied he was trying to sell his show. Such a vigorous denial probably meant that the rumours relative to shopping his circus were true.

It took another week to span Ohio, entering at Defiance (6/10) and exiting at Ravenna (6/16). Business and the weather improved somewhat. At least the show was making its nut for the first time in 1913. With the upturn in business, however modest,

The Wyoming Bill Wild West show provided opposition for Robbins in 1913. Circus World Museum collection.



morale followed in kind. A fairly long weekday jump of 80 miles took the show to Greenville, Pennsylvania (6/17). There business was good. It was even better the next day at Union City (just 20 miles south of Erie) where large and enthusiastic crowds populated both performances. The various equine acts and the elephants were rated very high.


Nirvana occurred on June 19th at Randolph, New York. It was as promised. Both weather and business were good. Then it was to Gowanda, 25 miles to the north where the Randolph experience was repeated. First in business was registered at Salamanca (6/21). Due to the reconstruction of a principle bridge in the middle of the town, unloading had to be redirected to West Salamanca. This resulted in a very long haul to the show grounds. The combination of the long haul and the fact that the parade would have to be restricted to side streets, caused the cancellation of the event. People still turned out for a good day at the ticket wagon in spite of having very tired baggage horses in the back lot. Continuing east, Cuba and Wellsville were in the right side of the ledger. That wasn't the case at Addison (6/25). There a violent thunderstorm visited the area at the same time as the parade was beginning. Such was the rage of the rain gods, the parade had to scurry back to the lot, which by this time was a sea of mud. A fair number of locals were in the seats

when the performance began as scheduled (2:30 p.m.). Because of the condition of the lot, only one ring could be used. However, the audiences seemed to enjoy the offerings and clearly understood the conditions that the circus was facing. The storm did considerable damage to the crops in the area and several homes were hit by lightning.

Corning was but 10 miles from Addison. It was a much larger town and with better weather provided much better business for the show. Young Buffalo Wild West visited both Corning and the next day Waverly about a month earlier. Owego (6/28) completed a very good week. During the teardown and the haul to the runs, a wagon carrying the stable tents and para-

phernalia was demolished when struck by a streetcar. The six baggage horses escaped any injury. It was a dip into northeast Pennsylvania to close out June at Susquehanna and then a short run back to New York at Deposit (7/1). A pretty good day was spent at Hancock on the banks of the Delaware River. Crisscrossing the Delaware back into Pennsylvania, the show was locally reported in a railroad accident en route to its Honesdale date (7/3). It turned out to be false and the circus arrived at about 7 a. m. As the site of the alleged accident was Hawley, Pennsylvania, a fair distance south of Honesdale, the run from Hancock (considerably to the north of Honesdale) must have included a passage over the Delaware near Port Jervis, New York, many miles to the south of Hawley. The 10 car Wyoming Bill's Historical Wild West Show was following Frank A. in Honesdale by about a week. Being on the topside of the competition was a positive move as Frank A. did fine business there. The railroad center of Port Jervis was the holiday location for both the Fourth of July and the circus. A great day for all concerned. Suffern, New York (7/5), on the border of New Jersey's Bergen County, closed out another good week. Frank A. finally culminated his crawl east when he finally reached the banks of the Hudson River at Newburgh, New York (7/7). Two good houses were reported. The trained horses, acrobats and tightwire walkers drew strong afternoons. The concerts were also well attended at 10 cents admission. The parade was widely enjoyed. An attempt to reduce the license fee from \$50 to \$25 met with failure because the Mayor stepped in and vetoed a resolution to that effect by the City Council. The Mayor's position was based upon his belief that the only way the license could be reduced was a formal amendment to the controlling ordinance, which was a lengthy process. While in this town, a painter was hired to travel with the show for a short time to paint the train and to touch up other equipment. Nyack, 15 miles south of Newburgh and also on the Hudson, proved to be a replication of Newburgh's business and reception

One Day Only
Wed. Aug. 27



THE GREATEST OF ALL
 SENSATIONS

AUTO-POLO

STAMPEDE CHAMPIONS

LUCILLE	OTTO
MULHALL	KLINE

TWICE DAILY, 2 AND 8 P. M.
 FRONTIER STREET PARADE
 AT 10 A. M.

The Arlington & Beckman Oklahoma Ranch Wild West was another problem for Robbins in 1913. Pfening Archives.

to the fine performances.

While watching the evening program, a local fell from the bleachers and sustained serious injuries to his ribs. A full recovery was predicted. Hackensack was the initial entry in New Jersey and as usual, delivered good business. While there Mrs. Howard, wife of boss canvasman, Blackie Howard, departed for Geneva, Ohio, where she planned to raise chickens awaiting her mate's arrival after the show closed in the fall. Ranking just below chicken raising does not speak well for the fun of circusing. Rutherford (7/10) continued the recent pace of business. Unfortunately, a young lad watching the set-up of the circus, left the grounds to get a drink of water. In doing so, he crossed the street and into the path of an oncoming touring car. He was crushed and not expected to live. Not every circus day is a happy day. At Montclair, New Jersey,

(7/12) rain finally disrupted the winning streak of good days. It was heavy enough to cause only scattered attendance in the evening. Robbins followed Oklahoma Ranch Wild West at Montclair. On the other hand, it preceded Sanger's Great European Circus by a couple of weeks at Port Jervis, Passaic, Hackensack and Montclair. Sanger was heading southward from a month plus tour of Canada en route to a long southern excursion.

Long Island, New York had been a source of many successful dates for Robbins over the years. He first made the ferry trip journey during the first year that his circus was on rails, 1884. Unless something major intervened (such as the outstanding warrant for his arrest in New York State), he made a two-week tour of this promontory almost annually. Because of the general excellence of his program offerings, the local population looked forward to his visits and were rewarded in kind. After the Montclair date the show journeyed to Jersey City, boarded the train ferry, and floated across New York City's harbour destined for Port Washington on Long Island's North Shore and the Monday date (7/14) there. Hempstead was next for its usual fine attendance. Huntington (7/17) did likewise. Still on the North Shore, Port Jefferson (7/18) contributed to the coffers and Riverside at the hub of the fork concluded the first week on the up side. On the reverse trip toward New York City, Greenport (7/20) started it all off with a good day. It was a long haul of almost 70 miles to reach Sag Harbour, ensconced on the southern fork, a mere 10 or so miles south of Greenport, as the sea gull flies. The visit was rewarded by excellent houses that had to sit somewhat uncomfortably through much dust kicked up during the performance because of the extended rainless period in the area. Dabbling with the elites at Southampton (7/23), the coin of the realm was exchanged with the desired frequency. The week concluded at Freeport, but a mile from the present famous Jones Beach. This Saturday date (7/26) also registered at the box office. All-in-all, Long Island did all that could be expected in extending the life of the Frank A.

Robbins All Feature Shows.

A return trip by ferry took the show back to New Jersey and a short rail trip took it to its first date there, Long Branch (7/28). Long Branch's business and that of Asbury Park (7/31) were enhanced by an unusual event transpiring at yet another date, Spring Lake (7/30). These three summer resort towns are only a few miles apart. When booking the dates, Frank A. was intending to schedule Manasquan as the July 30th town. However, some of the Spring Lake summer residents got together and made a proposal to Mr. Robbins that if he would schedule Spring Lake, they would take care of the advance ticket sales, inject a number of skilled locals into the program so that it would become a "Society Circus" and act as boosters in every conceivable way. For instance, when the advance crew came into the town, many of the resort hotels permitted posting an impressive array of lithos throughout those establishments. In addition, the local newspapers agreed to carry stories related to the circus day at no cost to the show. Those stories and the whole affair were picked up by newspapers in nearby Long Branch and Asbury Park thereby exciting those populations to see the Society Circus when it played their towns. And there was more. For the Spring Lake date only, in addition to the regular reserved seats, 40 special boxes would be erected in the hippodrome track and sold at an even higher price than the reserves just behind them. The Governor of New Jersey and other politicians were expected to attend in force.

After a good date in Toms River (7/29), the circus arrived at Spring Lake fully prepared for a great day and a great day it was. The weather cooperated to its utmost. And so did the local society starting at the parade in the morning. Over 100 prominent men from New York, Philadelphia and New Jersey proudly marched along. In the lead large red convertible driven by Henry Rogers, society member at large, were former New Jersey Governor Franklin Fort, Samuel Heilner wealthy coal merchant of



Still another wild west show, Young Buffalo, provided opposition to Robbins in 1913. Pfening Archives.

Philadelphia, Dr. James Clemens of New York and none other than Frank A., of circus fame. All were dressed in summer white suits. Many of the wealthy summer folks dressed as clowns and did their thing both during the parade and the performances. The parade was further augmented by society members riding their high school horses to the enjoyment of the watchers. At the lot, the ticket sellers and talkers were given the day off. In their places were locals who sold tickets and cajoled the buyers into spending more, all for the good cause of the recipient of the donations, a nearby hospital. In the process, the side show did booming business. Once in the big top, the locals gave the candy butchers the day off as well and assumed those roles to the great benefit of the circus treasury and the hospital. The big top was packed for both performances and over \$4,000 was taken in, some of which was targeted for the hospital but much made its way into the show's cash box. Because of her outstanding assistance given throughout the entire affair, during her high school act, Winnie Robbins was presented with a huge bunch of

Robbins ran into the Great Sanger show in 1913. Pfening Archives.



flowers of appreciation from the hospital staff. By any measure, it was a day for the books.

The circus cadre was still in a mindset of revetment when the show reached its next stand at Red Bank. There the realities of circus business brought the dreamers to earth. Although the afternoon business was fine, a violent storm arose around dinnertime and blew down the dressing tents. Even more important, the storm tore large holes in the big top making the non-weatherproof canvas even less so. Ergo, the night performance was cancelled. All was not lost for the Red Bank folks because in about a week Young Buffalo Wild West would be in town to vie for the entertainment dollar. Not that such good fortune for Young Buffalo interested our hero. Frank A. headed north again. The next stand at Butler (8/2) permitted only some temporary repairs to be made to the canvas. Business was very good at both performances with the night crowd admiring both the performance and the shining stars for the single price of admission. Extensive repairs were not made until Sunday (8/3) at Sussex, New Jersey (about 5 miles south of the New York State line), where the layover permitted a throng of canvasmen, armed with needle and thread, to attack the errant canvas with a vengeance and effect the much needed permanent repairs. Only fair attendance was had at both performances. During the loading one of the featured black stallions broke loose and proceeded through the village at a gallop, being as nasty as he could be. Finally corralled, he was convinced that his immediate well being rested upon his

peaceful return to the train. Once accomplished, all was well until at the next stand it was discovered that a clown's cart was left behind in Sussex. It had to be express shipped by rail to the show. Frank A. could not have displayed a happy face over this expenditure of scarce funds. It was back into New York for the fourth time during this season with a stand at Ellenville (8/5). The two good crowds greatly enjoyed the performances, with the six black stallions (including the bad actor) being singled out as a display of the first order. Liberty was next in clear view of the beautiful Catskill Mountains. Both Ellenville and Liberty were played in mid July by the Sanger Organization but that did not seem to affect the business done by Frank A. White at Liberty, C. Burkhart joined as the manager of the side show, apparently replacing A. L. Salvail who left earlier, presumably taking his wife with him. His departure must just have occurred as the August 9th edition of the *New York Clipper* sported an ad by Frank A. for a man to manage the side show as well as performers for both the big and sideshows.

Continuing in a northerly direction the route skirted the Catskills at Roscoe, Downsville and finally Margaretville (8/9). At the latter town disappointment reined supreme by the town gents because circus day coincided with a special town meeting, which meant that all of the bars and saloons were closed. Not too many tears were shed at the circus grounds however as business remained good. At the Delaware County seat of Delhi (8/11), the show was contrasted with the "Sanger crowd" which played nearby Walton and Sidney about three weeks earlier. Sanger was alleged to have the usual group of confidence men hanging on while Frank A.'s aggregation had none. Times certainly had changed! Robbins did just fine there even though the California Expo of Horticultural and Agricultural delights followed in Delhi for the next two days. New Berlin in central New York turned in strictly a vanilla day with nothing noteworthy but the good and orderly business done. Samosamo at Richfield Springs (8/13) with Winnie Robbins receiving



Tompkins Real Wild West, a wagon show, crossed the Robbins route in 1913. Pfening Archives.

special praise for her clever and skilful riding of her black horse. All three rings were occupied during almost the entire program that kept the audiences both busy and pleased. Lots of country folks railed in on regular and excursion trains at Norwich (8/15) to help augment the local populations attending the circus. The good day was marred by a serious accident to a roustabout who had two toes crushed and then removed as a result of a heavy wagon running over his foot during the teardown. It was expected that he would remain hospitalized for two weeks. After a Saturday date at Greene (8/16), the show took a mighty weekend leap to Bath, near the foot of the Finger Lake, Keuka. At Bath, two excellent houses enjoyed the presentations. Tompkins Wild West's visit in two days obviously did nothing to inhibit business. During the teardown a couple of town roughees decided to pull a teamster from his wagon perch. A whispered "hey rube" brought together a number of roustabouts who entered into a philosophical discourse regarding the whys and wherefores of permitting teamsters to go about their business. Sensing no satisfaction in persuading the interlopers about the wisdom of promptly leaving the circus lot, the circus folks proceeded to rearrange the location of their physical extremities. It was not long before the point

was made and quiet returned to the area, and the circus completed its teardown in good order. For the following 10 or so days, the show first continued west until it almost reached Buffalo at East Aurora (8/25), and then drifted east playing Attica (8/27) and LeRoy (8/28) before scheduling Canandaigua at the northern tip of the Finger Lake of the same name. Weather and business continued good. The third tour of New York ended at Watkins Glen (8/30) at the foot of Seneca Lake. What a handsome location to complete a very satisfying visit to the Empire State that began well over two months earlier. Frank A. should have been there in early May rather than ploughing through Iowa seeking patrons that never seemed to be.

Meanwhile, in response to his ad for additional performers, the program was augmented by nine skilled artists. They included William DeMott who returned with his wife, Eunice, and their riding acts; The Gothard Troupe (3), with aerial, acrobatic and wire skills; Miss Marie Millett, trapeze and rings; and the Crandell Troupe (3), riders and acrobats extraordinaire. With these professionals, Frank A. was offering a very strong program to its public.

A brief Pennsylvania excursion followed. It merely provided the means of getting from New York to the southern climes. Troy (9/1), fifty miles south of Watkins Glen, was the port of entry. It was just fair. This was not the case at Canton (9/2) where Frank A. followed Tompkins Wild West by a day. Tompkins was a wagon show. It started to arrive in Canton early Sunday morning and continued in bits and pieces throughout the day. Fair business ensued on Monday. Robbins did much better on Tuesday where the two very good houses were thoroughly pleased with the performances. The *Canton Sentinel* praised both shows for conducting themselves in a most orderly manner. Continuing south, Muncy (9/4), a few miles from Williamsport, and Lykens (9/5), presaged the exit point of Shewsbury (9/6), only a stones throw from the Mason Dixon Line and Maryland. Frank A. did not expect too much for this foray and did not get too much. But it was a way of getting there and the financial

reserves, such as they were, remained at least as strong if not a bit enlarged.

As he embarked upon the southern tour, Robbins was very busy on another front. He was still trying to either sell his show intact or merge it with another whose owner had financial wherewithal beyond what was required to get the merged show out of winter quarters. In pursuit of the elusive buyer, Frank A. placed the following ad in the September 13 *Billboard*: "FOR SALE/The Frank A. Robbins Shows/Attractive Price, wagons and paraphernalia, 25% of new. Flat and Stock Cars, 50% of new; Sleepers and Advertising Car, Cheap. Horses at dealers' buying price. Terms, cash, as will leave for an extended trip around the world. Grand opportunity for some one; the finest show property, bar none. Come on and see the property and the business, and you can readily see it is not because the show is not making money and plenty of it that it is for sale. . . ." After spending most of the season claiming that his show was not for sale, there it was--FOR SALE! As we all know, many circus owners placed their shows on sale at the end of the season, in fact every single year. Most of these ads were placed in the unlikely event that a buyer would come along with real money and purchase the whole lot. It didn't mean that the seller really intended to get out of the business but maybe stay on the sidelines until the new owner went belly up and step back in to buy back his circus for a song. This was never the case with Frank A. Robbins. His circus was his life; it was more than a business. It was a love affair so his offering to sell was a serious departure from where he was and where he was going. Looking at the ad in detail, it claims that the circus was "the finest show property in America." There is little evidence to support this claim. At the outset of the 1912 season, perhaps a case could be made in this regard but after selling off some of his cage wagons and shrinking his show in 1913, such a claim would tax the imagination. We will recall that

FOR SALE

THE FRANK A. ROBBINS SHOWS

Price, wagons and paraphernalia, 25% of new. Flat and Stock Cars, 50% of new; Sleepers and Advertising Car, cheap. Horses at dealers' buying price. Terms cash, as will leave for an extended trip around the world. Grand opportunity for some one; the finest show property in America, bar none. Come on and see the property and the business, and you can readily see it is not because the show is not making money and plenty of it that it is for sale.

FRANK A. ROBBINS

Dover, Del., Sept. 12; Harrington, Del., Sept. 13; Lewes, Del., Sept. 15; Georgetown, Del., Sept. 16; Frankford, Del., Sept. 17.

The for sale ad Robbins ran in the September 13, 1913 *Billboard*. Circus World Museum collection.

a couple of months earlier in Newburgh, New York, he took on a painter to spruce up the train and perhaps some of the wagons as well. This was an unusual midseason action. Could it be that he was preparing to sell the show back then? Food for thought. Next, what about this alleged world tour? Sounds like press agent gibberish at first blush. But there were discussions about such matters with William Hall as we soon will see. Perhaps not a world tour but certainly a tour of major European animal repositories. And lastly, how about this good business that he claimed. The circus community was a small one and anyone well connected would have known the plight of the show during the first couple of months of the 1913 tour. But they may not have heard how well the show was doing at this time. There was very little in the trade publications. Once it regained its old and reliable stamping grounds of New York State, it is the writer's judgment that every week was a winner--often a fairly large winner. The show was doing business and was proud of it. As such, he wanted "Doubting Thomas" to see for themselves and be convinced this show was a moneymaker. In reflection, there was more truth in Frank A.'s ad than originally meets the eye.

We do not know whether there was a large response to the "For Sale" ad. However, we do have evidence of one such expression of interest and Frank A.'s remarkable response thereto. On September 15th a Charles Ives of Seattle, Washington, wrote the following letter: "Dear Sir: I saw your ad in the *Billboard* stating that you want to sell your show. I am going to put out a show next sea-

son but I have not started to buy anything as yet. So if you have not sold your show I would like to get your prices on the whole show. So if you will write me and let me know what you have for sale. Let me know the price of stuff when new and the price you ask now. If you have photos of show please send them. I will be in Chicago about Nov 15 or later. Let me know where I can see the show about that time. What animals have you? Let me have all. I mean buss--I have the money." Whether Mr. Ives really had the money is not known. As far as can be determined, this was a serious inquiry, and as such, called for a serious response. And what was that response? There was none, at least until October 20th when Frank A. penned: "Dear Sir (Mr. Ives): We have decided not to sell our show. You can buy a show of from two to fifty cars, horses, elephants, cages, wagons, tableaux, calliope, cars etc. complete from Wm. P. Hall, Lancaster, MO. That is 1500 miles nearer your home than we are and you can get any sized show you want at a reasonable figure." Why the inordinately lengthy period in order to respond? Why the change of heart regarding selling the show? The lack of a prompt response was a direct result of another Frank A. initiative being undertaken which will be discussed shortly. And why he decided not to sell the show--we just don't know but it may be related to the fact that by the end of the season most of the business debts had been satisfied. Concluding the matter of Charles Ives who appeared to be connected with the Al. G. Barnes Circus in some capacity, he did, in fact, contact William Hall in 1914 discussing the possibility of putting out a ten-car show and requiring appropriate equipment to put it together.

Meanwhile, there was a circus season going on. The southern tour

began at Havre de Grace, Maryland (9/8). There both performances were well attended with the audience loving the bareback and equestrian presentations. Turning into Delmarva, Millington



and Centreville (9/10) were in the black. Chestertown was even more so despite following Downie & Wheeler by about a week and preceding Tompkins by about a month. One of the Robbins' performers, Eunice Storke, formerly lived in Chestertown. She was a bareback rider and reportedly was paid \$200 per week. Now that is a show that most performers would love to work for! Then it was across the Delaware State line to the capital city of Dover (9/12) and nearby Harrington. All continued well. It should be noted that the Sangers Great European Shows visited many of the Delmarva towns in the spring. However it is doubtful that business was affected at all by this early competition. But with Downie and Wheeler marching in lock step with our hero, and with Young Buffalo Wild West beating Robbins into Dover, Salisbury and Cambridge by a couple of weeks, Frank A. was the fourth travelling unit in some towns and that had to have its impact upon business. Yet, all-in all, attendance was quite good considering and the fine weather did its share to encourage the locals to see another circus.

Continuing in a southerly direction, the show played a Monday date at Lewes, Delaware, (9/15) at the mouth of the Delaware Bay. After a couple of more dates in Delaware, the Show re-entered Maryland at Snow Hill (9/18) approaching the Virginia border on the Delmarva Peninsula. At Crisfield (9/20), Frank A. followed Downie and Wheeler by three days. Here Frank A.'s superior reputation garnered the bucks whereas the early arriver had poor attendance for an equally poor performance.

One might think that the intense competition between Downie et al and Frank A. would have resulted in hard feelings, at least for a while. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, just the opposite was

Robbins had discussions with Al. F. Wheeler in 1913. Pfening Archives.

extant--what was being considered was the possible merger between Al Wheeler interests and those of Frank A. On September 20th, Al. F. Wheeler wrote to Frank A. as follows: "Mr. Downie and myself came to an agreement yesterday, and our property here is to be divided at the close of the season each taking half of the property over. This will with what show property I have with the Tompkins Wild West will leave me with quite a bunch of show property on my hands at the close of the season. However I am looking for a new title for next season and always have a little extra capital available for any deal that looks good, have my own private siding and room to handle the Barnum Show at the Fair Grounds. If you do not find a buyer for your complete outfit before your closing date perhaps we can get together for a part of the outfit, or in some other way.

"I would again like to impress on your mind than any talk we have had will be held strictly confidential and would ask you to kindly hold what I am giving you regarding Mr. Downie's and my deal the same as we do not want to make that public at present. I will probably have to go to Oxford (Pennsylvania) the winter quarters of Wheeler's shows) before your closing date and will try to stop off and see you again on my way up."

Obviously this letter followed on the heels of face-to-face discussions or exchanges of prior letters between Messrs. Wheeler and Robbins. The predicted split-up of Downie and Wheeler did take place as mentioned. The results were a bit different than expected by Mr. Wheeler. Each partner took 50% of the stock but when it came to physical equipment the two gentlemen bid on each piece with the higher bidder getting the piece. Mr.

Downie was the successful bidder on most of the equipment, which in turn formed the basis of his LaTena Circus in 1914. As a result, Al Wheeler had less equipment than he anticipated which

probably increased his interest in combining with Frank A. in some fashion. On September 29th Mr. Wheeler again wrote to Robbins saying: "Came up here (Lincolnton, North Carolina) to make some changes in our advance which accounts for delay in answering your wire to Oxford, (Pennsylvania). Will start north tonight stopping off at Franklinton tomorrow and will try to reach you either at Greensboro, (Maryland) Wed. night or at Middletown, (Delaware) early Thursday morning." Presumably this meeting would go a long way in determining whether a merger was desirable and practical. There were rumours rampant that Downie and Wheeler had purchased the Robbins Show. These rumours were reinforced by the fact that after Robbins' season ended on October 4th, his show train went to the Wheeler's winter quarters at Oxford. It remained there for a couple of weeks until it moved on to its permanent quarters at the Trenton (NJ) state fairgrounds. This writer does not know why the deal concerning the merger wasn't consummated. It might have been based upon who actually would control the merged show. Frank A. always ran his circus although he had partners from time to time; e.g. 1905-07. Although Al Wheeler had most recently come from a full and active partnership with Andrew Downie, it did split up after three years, perhaps as a result of a turf war. Speculation will get us nowhere--it just did not work out.

There was still a season to complete. To that end, the show reached its southern most point at Eastville, Virginia (9/23). It is only a short jaunt further south to get on the ferry to cross the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay to reach Norfolk. But it wasn't in the cards. Frank A. reversed direction and headed north, first to Pocomoke, Maryland (9/24),

and then picked up Salisbury, Maryland and Seaford, DE before reaching an old favourite, Cambridge, Maryland on September 27th. There the show followed Young Buffalo (9/3) and Downie & Wheeler (9/9). Business was clearly impacted by the competition--too much--too recent. September was closed out at Easton, Maryland.

Over the past ten days and to the conclusion of the season, attendance diminished somewhat and break-even became the measure of a successful day. It was time to end the season before the cash box was eroded. The season's end date was pushed up from October 11th, then to October 7th, and finally to October 4th; interestingly always at Port Deposit, Maryland. With a sigh of relief, it was over and the show remained intact.

Just how solvent Frank A. Robbins was becomes evident by the following two letters. On September 11th he wrote to his friend and sometime business associate, William Hall, saying: "Enclosed find check for \$100. This make(s) 7 of them so please send two of the \$100 notes. I am sorry to be so long. How am I going to sell 17 horses? Have always sold them at auction at Fiss, Doer & Carrolls'. You spoke about some place in Philadelphia (perhaps the Meng Brothers). They are in nice condition. I would prefer to sell them outright, if I could. I think they will bring \$150 each but would sell them for \$125, 17 or 19 of them. If you have anyone east here to look at them I wish you would have them do so. I am going to furnish Nugents (St. Louis) with a menagerie and would like to sell you the animals afterwards. Ship them from there after engagement, which would be about Jan. 1st. I would take the pay in horses. I will have to have 20 next spring and ought to have 28. If you send me to Europe and we make money, will get 28. We will winter east some place. I have a lioness. Can ship any time, if you can sell one for 3 to 4 hundred. We expect to close Oct.



Henry Kern's Frank A. Robbins Circus big show band in 1913. Pfening Archives.

11th." Digesting this letter indicates that he probably bought baggage horses from Hall at the outset of the season and as of this date hadn't satisfied this debt. He was still short of money to fund the purchase of new baggage horses for the start of 1914. He was intending to take a circus out the next year notwithstanding he was offering his show for sale. Robbins still did not know where he was wintering his show at this time so the discussions with Al Wheeler had either not occurred at all by September 11th or they were in the initial stages of exploration. And lastly, Frank A. was hoping to be sent by Hall to Europe to buy animals for resale in the United States. Put into context, there was plenty being said in this letter.

There was even more information including vital financial data contained in another letter from Frank A. to William Hall dated October 20th. It says in pertinent part: "Are you going to use the woman that worked your elephants this summer? If not I might. I see by your list to the picture people that you have a zebra. A good Chapman zebra is worth \$800. Ruhe (large American animal dealer) sold six for \$775 each. I do not believe we could get animals in from Europe. We can get animals in from England, but they will not let anything into England. I bought an axis deer and heard of a llama. There may be something in the parks. I sent you a check for \$375 and will send you another in a short time, will try and do something to make up for being so long winded.

Mr. Carroll's death was a bad thing for me. I paid them \$3,200 and Bartells \$750 and all my small notes and accounts except \$350 to Gehm and yours. Am booked solid for horses and elephants. Cost me a little for mats, curbs etc., but it will all come back soon."

It is clear that Mr. Robbins had cleared all of his debts by this time except for some amount to Mr. Gehm (of Venice Transportation Co. as may relate to repair of one or more rail cars) and William Hall. With regard to Mr. Hall, he still owed some more money but the end was in sight for the full satisfaction of this debt. The statement about being long-winded refers to the fact that the debt was long overdue and Frank A. intended to pay an extra sum in recognition of Mr. Hall's forbearance. The horses and elephants had been booked on the vaudeville circuit and a steady stream of income from their activities would provide the wherewithal of satisfying all outstanding obligations and perhaps provide some getaway money in the spring. So even though he wasn't in the clear yet, he could see a plus side to this venture. It seems that the European trip was off as for an unknown reason, he did not believe that animals could not be exported from the continent at this time. World War I was still ten months away and tensions in Europe were no greater in the fall of 1913 than normal. There may have been some disease rampant.

Also on October 20th, Frank A. Robbins authored another letter, this time to a gentleman named "John". This person was contemplating taking out a circus for the 1914 season and Frank A. had some words of advice on how this person could approach the problem of fitting out the show. Regarding his performing animals, he said: "\$250 is all I can get for the elephants in New York and Philadelphia. and \$300 for the horses. We open with both on United time two weeks from today." A total of \$550 per week of gross income

would be anticipated for the November-to-March timeframe. It would be reasonable to anticipate that salaries would amount to around \$250 per week. There would be another \$50 per week for maintaining the animals including food and perhaps another \$75 a week to move the animals from town to town. If the foregoing is a reasonable accounting of the costs, then Frank A. could expect a return of approximately \$175 per week profit for his acts. He had to make due with this amount for living expenses, satisfaction of existing debts, and wintering his show in Trenton. His business office was at his home in Jersey City so there wasn't any added expenses there. His finances were in a very precarious position and finding the funds to ready the show in the spring would present a challenge. There was a note in the *New York Clipper* of November 29th that Joseph Berris was handling the horses and William Thompson the elephants on the vaudeville circuit. It also revealed that the Frank A. menagerie was going to be the holiday feature at the Berg Brother's Department Store of Philadelphia. This was only thirty miles from the winter quarters in Trenton, New Jersey, which may have represented a better deal than shipping the animals out to Nugent's Department Store in St. Louis. This being the case, it is suspected that the animals were not then sold to William Hall as originally contemplated. Work in readying the circus for the 1914 season was not scheduled until after the new year commenced.

Lest one thinks that the book was closed on events in this most dynamic season, fear not for there is one more page to turn. In the November 29th issue of the *Billboard*, it was announced under a bold headline that read "MRS. FANNY ROBBINS DEAD" the following: "Mrs. Fanny Robbins, wife of Frank A. Robbins, passed away at her home in Mt. Vernon, New York, today (Nov. 19). She was born at Newport, New York, where she spent her childhood days, afterwards becoming a school teacher, and later became the wife of Frank A. Robbins. Mrs. Robbins had been suffering with heart trouble for a long time and realities that her life

was of short duration; she did her utmost to help make the lives of others, especially her boys, happy. She died a Christian, and it is safe to say she died without an enemy in the world. A husband and three children survive her. One child, a girl, died at an early age. Frank, Jr. and Charles are well-known showmen and have many friends who will mourn the loss of their beloved mother." Was this death notice the ultimate act of vengeance of Frank and Fanny's children upon Frank A. in deliberately misrepresenting the marital status of their divorced father and mother. It certainly seems so. It also probably seemed so to Frank A. as well because the following was in a subsequent issue of the same publication. Under the equally bold headline that read: "NOT OUR FRANK A. ROBBINS' WIFE," a most unusual retraction was made: "A queer thing happened in our issue of week before last.

A notice, apparently well authenticated, was sent as announcing the death of Mrs. Fanny Robbins, wife of Frank A. Robbins, and we accepted in good faith and printed it. Last week Mr. Robbins, writing from Jersey City, enclosed the clipping of the notice, and said, "The lady who passed away may have left a husband, but it was not I. Have a wife and two children, and it makes matters a little unpleasant for me. I know your judgment in the matter, if exercised, will be better than mine, and I also know that it is not the policy to pain anyone at all, me especially." The bitterness had not subsided one iota. The revenge of the children upon the father and

then the father's refusal to recognize them as his children. It doesn't get much more harsh than this.

So the 1913 year had thankfully passed. It was a terrible experience for Frank A. commencing with his payment of alimony to Fanny, which was then followed by Frank A.'s determination to play the middle west before heading east, slightly alleviated by the generally good business once he reached the friendly and familiar confines of New York, tempered by his inability to merge the show with Al Wheeler or sell it, and then finding himself still strapped for money as he entered into the winter months. The crowning blow came in late November with the death of his estranged wife, Fanny, and the mutual expression of hatred between Frank A. and the children of his union with Fanny. What started off with his surrender to Fanny ended up with his capitulation to the circumstances that he clearly created. 1913 was not a very good year by any measure.

Illinois State University Normal/Bloomington

ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY



Director, Gamma Phi Circus

Illinois State University is seeking a full-time director for the Gamma Phi Circus. This is a one-of-a-kind position. Gamma Phi Circus is a 73-year-old tradition at Illinois State, one of only two active major university circuses in the nation. The circus Director is in charge of planning, organizing, and managing the annual events and activities of the circus. The Director recruits, auditions, and selects among 100s of student performers, and coordinates staff and student support coaches. Annual circus events include three major Home Shows in Redbird Arena, 20-30 instructional exhibitions for regional schools and civic organizations, numerous public relations road shows and charitable events, and a summer circus camp. The Director manages all of the circus equipment and facilities, and is expected to teach several hours per year of circus-related courses. The Director is also responsible for budgeting, fundraising, and general fiscal management.

Successful candidates must have at least a Bachelor's degree and several years of circus performance/management or related experience. Knowledge of gymnastics and circus skills is a must. The Director must also be an experienced coach, and be able to perform spotting maneuvers and rig circus equipment. Other experiences desired include budgeting, management, teaching, public speaking, fund-raising, and successful experience directing groups of young people. For more details, see our website at www.exu.ilstu.edu. Salary will be commensurate with qualifications and experience.

The position has a preferable starting date of January 15, 2003. Initial review of applications will begin on November 1, 2002 and continue until the position is filled. To assure full consideration, send a cover letter, resume (including salary history), a copy of your educational transcripts, and a list of three references by November 1, 2002, to: Dr. Galen Crow, Executive Director; Extended University; Illinois State University; Campus Box 4090; Normal, IL 61790-4090; Phone (309) 438-5288; Email gbcrow@ilstu.edu

Illinois State is an equal opportunity/affirmative action university encouraging diversity

WANTED! \$1,000 REWARD

**Wanted! Anything pertaining to the
Fred Buchanan Circuses of Granger,
Iowa.**

TITLES USED

YANKEE ROBINSON 1906-1920

WORLD BROS. 1923

ROBBINS BROS. 1924-31

**I will pay \$1,000 to locate and use a photo of
circus train parked on siding at the Granger
quarters.**

All letters answered

MERRY CHRISTMAS
and HAPPY NEW YEAR

Joseph S. Rettinger

P. O. Box 20371

Phoenix, AZ 85036

Call Collect

Evenings Weekends

(602) 956-3077

Source Books Now on CDs



A valuable tool for circus historians and genealogists. The CD format makes searching easy, simple. Texts can be copied and printed from a single line to an entire manuscript. Installed on your desktop, the icon allows instant retrieval. The CDs are Adobe PDF files, requiring an Adobe Reader, which can be downloaded from the Adobe webpage at no expense.



Olympians of the Sawdust Circle - A Biographical Dictionary of the 19th Century Circus, with over 6,000 entries, the premier biographical source for circuses. The book, now out of print, sold for \$50; the CD can be purchased for \$22 USA postpaid.

Burnt Cork and Tambourines - A Directory of American Minstrelsy, never before offered. Contains T. Allston Brown's "Early History of Negro Minstrelsy," a painstaking documentation of its rise and progress in the United States, the most complete record of the genre ever assembled, with biographies, histories of various troupes and more, plus a collection of articles written by men who were closely involved with the blackface entertainment. \$22 USA postpaid.

Send order: William Slout, 2995 Ladera Road, San Bernardino, CA 92405.

Happy New Year!
from the
**BINDLESTIFF
FAMILY
CIRKUS**

The Palace of Variety



WWW.BINDLESTIFF.ORG
1-877-BINDLES

Side Lights On The Circus Business

PART TWENTY-SIX

By David W. Watt

Editor's note. The dates listed are the days the article appeared in the Janesville, Wisconsin Gazette.

December 4, 1915

The first five years which I put in the circus business, as many of you know, was with the Burr Robbins circus. The first two years was as ticket agent and treasurer, and the next three as manager, and as manager I was held responsible for everything, such as getting the show over the road, ordering breakfast, both at the hotel and on the lot, and when the drive would be twenty or thirty miles, I must not only take into consideration the distance, but also the condition of the roads, and all the information must be had of the landlord or the livery man or both. And just when I knew I was right, and my orders, which were always written on the hotel register, Mr. Robbins would look at it and say, "You have ordered breakfast too early by one hour," when he knew nothing about the conditions, but seemed to think it necessary to find fault about so often.

One time, I recollect, he had been to Chicago for a few days and came back to the show when I knew everything was going fine, and found a great deal of fault. The breakfasts had been too early, and no use of keeping the people with the show up most of the night. This pleased the performers to see Mr. Robbins take their part, but all this made it hard for me; but when I told him if I was to be held responsible for getting the show over the road, I would have to have the breakfasts at the time I thought best, for I was on the ground all the time and knew the conditions and could not have my breakfasts interfered with.

One time in particular in the far west, we had a thirty-two mile drive

to make, and while the roads were supposed to be good, there were nine miles of this that was sandy and would be necessarily a dead pull with the heavy loads, and this, too, came on the later end of the drive, when the horses would be well tired out. I ordered a pack-up breakfast on the lot and a 12 o'clock breakfast at the hotel, and when Mr. Robbins looked at the register, he said, "I want you to change your order for breakfast at least two hours later."

I said, "Mr. Robbins, I have been out with the livery man several miles on this road, and there is no part of it any too good, and the last nine miles is sand, and we will hit it after daylight in the morning, and when the sun commences to pour down, it will tell on the tired horses, and this breakfast that I have ordered must go for I know the road so well, and it will be all we can do to get through and get up in time for an afternoon show."

And after saying a few things to me that would not look well in print, he said, "Rather than to have you talk all the rest of the afternoon about it, go ahead and have your own

The Burr Robbins Circus advance car in 1887. Circus World Museum collection.

way. That is the easiest way out of it for me."

We had the breakfast that night as ordered and the first wagon to land in the town the next day was at 11 o'clock and it was three o'clock in the afternoon before we could open the doors, which should have opened at one o'clock. And while Mr. Robbins gave me no credit for this, he did say during the afternoon that he found the roads much worse than he had expected. "After this," he said, "you can have your own way and order your breakfasts at any time that you see fit, and I will see that the order is carried out."

While many times Burr Robbins was a hard task master to work for, we had to take our hats off to him as being a high class manager of wagon shows in his day. [But] it made no difference what argument I might be in with the landlord, feed man or the lot owner, Burr Robbins would always take the part of the townsmen and against me, right or wrong, and this always left the people of the towns where we showed thinking that Burr Robbins was all right and their friend.

One evening last week, I happened to drop into the lobby of the hotel and accidentally got into conversation with a traveling man who was soon asking me about the conditions of the



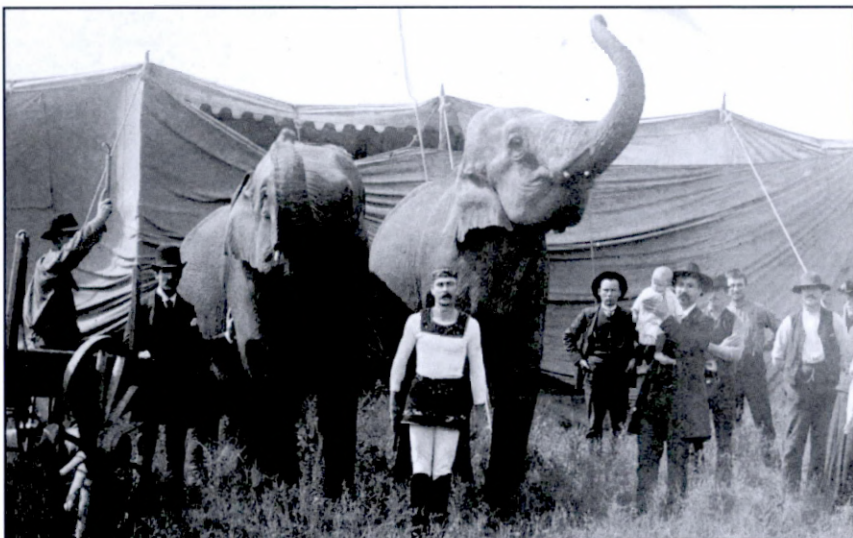
country around here in a business way. "For," he said, "I am an easterner and only make this country twice a year, so that I know but little about it."

He asked me if I had ever been east and when I told him that my business for some years called me both east and west and that I was in the show business for several years, he brightened up and said, "You are talking now about something that I know something about, especially if you were in the circus business." I told him that that had been my business for many years and that for eleven years I went east early in the spring and that Philadelphia had been the wintering place of the show, which was the Adam Forepaugh circus and menagerie.

"Well," he said, "I thought your face looked familiar when I first saw you. For years I saw you at the Forepaugh home, which was only three doors from where my parents lived for many years, and young Adam Forepaugh and I were particular friends, and more than once in the spring, I have taken an order to you at the ticket wagon for seats, which young Forepaugh always provided me with every spring."

This man's name was Frank H. Wheleman, and for many years his home was at 1632 Green Street, while Adam Forepaugh's was 1628. Mr. Wheleman still makes his home in Philadelphia when not on the road, and still lives at the same address. And while you accidentally run across old friends of this kind in a hotel lobby in this part of the country, you can only think that the world is not so large after all. Mr. Wheleman and I visited until everybody had left the hotel lobby except the night hand, and as Mr. Wheleman had to leave on an early morning train for Chicago, our visit was cut shorter than it might have been otherwise.

I received a bit of interesting news from Al Ringling a few days ago, in which he told me that in my write-up of the death of old Babe, the elephant, at their winter quarters, that to Janesville people I have omitted some interesting details. "For old Babe was not only our first," he said, "but she was also the first elephant that Burr Robbins ever owned in



The Burr Robbins Circus elephants. Circus World Museum collection.

show business, and for some years her home was at the winter quarters at Spring Brook."

Burr Robbins bought old Babe in the fall of '74, forty-one years ago this fall and she was some curiosity at that time, for she was the first elephant to make her home in Janesville during the winter. But this I did not know at the time of her death. Babe was sold with the balance of the Burr Robbins show to a theatrical man in Chicago by the name of Tom Grenier, and a few years later was sold to the Ringlings.

Ed Ballard of West Baden, Ind., is reported to have purchased C. E. Cory's interest in the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus.

B. E. Wallace of Peru, Ind., Charles E. Cory and Jerry Mugivan are reported to have bought the Forepaugh-Sells Brothers circus of the Ringling Brothers and will send it on the road next season. It has been known for some time that Mr. Mugivan has been seeking a big show and the circus bee is said to have stung B. E. Wallace in his retirement. Some time since, Mr. Wallace took up negotiations with Ringling Brothers with the idea of purchasing the Barnum & Bailey show, presumably for this triumvirate of showmen, and it is likely that the Forepaugh-Sells Brothers show is a compromise.

The Saratoga Hotel in Chicago is now circus headquarters and all sorts of gossip is heard there. Jake

Newman is in charge of the Barnum & Bailey Circus at Bridgeport is a tale which comes pretty straight. That J. B. Austin, general agent of the Gentry show, will be employed by Ringling Brothers in an important capacity next season is no longer denied. Some reports are that Col. Will Thompson will manage the Barnum & Bailey show, succeeding Sam McCracken. Other reports place Fred Warrell over there and rehash the rumor that J. B. Austin will manage the Ringling Brothers show. It is evident that the rumors heard around Chicago some time ago that there are to be changes in official circles of the Ringling Brothers, were based on facts, although early tales have not been confirmed.

December 11, 1915

In the early '80s, while showing in Bangor, Me., a business man of the town who had been strolling about the lot, stepped up to the ticket wagon and spoke to me, saying, "Young man, I have been much interested in watching you sell tickets while the crowd was coming thick and fast. Do you live in the East or are you a Westerner?"

When I told him that my home was in the West, in Wisconsin, he immediately said, "I suppose you live in Oshkosh."

"No," I said, "Janesville, Wis., is my home but only about 100 miles south-east of Oshkosh."

"Then," said he, "is there really such a city in the country as Oshkosh? Do you know Kaine has always been my home and I have

never been out of the state. And, as people here talk of Oshkosh, they seem to think it a byword and a myth, and I never supposed there was such a town." And at that time many people through the East thought that Oshkosh and Kalamazoo were simply bywords and that really no such towns existed.

About two weeks ago it seemed to be up to the *New York Mirror* to really have something to say about Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and at some length wrote up the town, the opera house and the owner and manager, which they say has made himself famous the world over for honest, upright dealing with shows of all kinds, even dating back to the Dan Rice show days in the early '60s, and this man is John Williams, known by both theatrical and circus managers as "Honest John." It is in his offices in the basement of the Grand Opera House—one of the best theatres in Wisconsin, by the way—that John Williams keeps his trophies. The walls are covered with them, photographs of favorites of three decades ago, taken before they had gained prominence in their chosen field; bills and programs of shows and companies, including the names of many a historic star; autographed photographs of those whose mention is a drawing card even now; and among them a photograph of Jumbo, P. T. Barnum's famous elephant, as he lay dead beside the railroad tracks, and a personal letter to Mr. Williams, detailing the manner in which the huge beast met his death. These are but a few. His safe discloses more treasures, hidden away for keeping. Among them you will find Billie Burke's Jumbo (sic) songster of 1881, when the father of the stage star of that name was clowning for the Barnum shows. There is a program of the Royal Lyceum, Toronto, Feb. 6, 1857, when Uncle Tom's Cabin was the bill. The actor listed as "Uncle Tom" was Denman Thompson. There is the letterhead of Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson's of 1873 [1883?], with such favorites as "The Bowery Girls," etc.

On Monday last, an old friend called on me whom I have not seen in thirty-four years; and, as he was only a youth of nineteen at that time, the years had made many changes, and,

of course, I was unable to place him. "Well," he said, "my name is James Hennessy, and I was a cornet player in 'Sunshine' Pop Gible's band in the Burr Robbins show in '81."

It was then that I recognized him at once, for many a time I had left my work at the main entrance of the show and came back to where young Hennessy played his cornet solo, which he did both afternoon and evening. He was one of the finest in the business in his day and on account of his youth, when young Hennessy would step out in front and play a solo, he was always greeted by thousands who would cheer him to the echo and they would not be satisfied until the young man would respond to a second number.

Hennessy told me that he always followed the business, but later moved from his former home in Mattoon, Ill., to St. Louis; but the only year after that he had put in with the circus was with the Ringling Brothers in 1892. He recalled many instances which happened during that season which, he said, made more of an impression on him than all the rest that had happened for many years later. James Hennessy is playing with a Chicago orchestra, where he expects to spend the balance of the winter.

The Billie Burke songster sold on the Barnum and London show. Circus World Museum collection.



Colonel Cody, Buffalo Bill, is said to be preparing to put out his own real wild west show in the spring of 1916. Present plans are of a nature to positively insure an opening by Cody at Madison Square Garden, New York, early next year, for a long run. Those who are in the "know" say that Cody's production will be far beyond the average, in fact a "crackerjack" with many new features.

Following the dissolution of Buffalo Bill-Pawnee Bill's Show in 1913, Tammen and Bonfils featured Colonel Cody with the Sells-Floto circus, with which he remained two years. The Colonel has now severed his connection with this concern and is looking forward with enthusiasm to the opening of a season with his "original wild west."

Col. Cody, at present, is in Chicago, accompanied by his son-in-law, John Baker, the great rifle shot. They were met there by Louis E. Cooke of Newark, N. J., who was manager two years ago of the 101 Ranch Wild West show which was taken to London and opened there, showing before the outbreak of the war. And possibly, before these men part, all plans will be perfected for the coming season.

Lincoln park zoo is mourning. The prize giraffe laid down Sunday evening and, resting his weary head some six feet away, he succumbed to an attack of paralysis. The giraffe, with its female mate, was presented to Lincoln Park two years ago by Mrs. Mollie Netcher-Newberger, owner of the Boston Store. She bought the pair for \$8,000 from the Hagenbeck collection in Germany while traveling there. The late prize winner was twelve feet in height and regarded as a superb specimen. The animal was seized with paralysis last Thursday. It had been in perfect health theretofore. Cy DeVry was heartbroken. He declared the park had felt no such blow in years. Mr. DeVry has suggested that the skin be stuffed for preservation in the Field Museum.

December 18, 1915

Last Sunday morning in the hotel I noticed an old gentleman whose appearance and general makeup was so far away from the ordinary man that he naturally attracted my attention. He was heavy built, stood more

than six feet in height, had a heavy growth of snow white hair which came down well on his shoulders, and he certainly had the appearance of an artist, poet or an actor. I was not long in getting into conversation with him and asked him if he was traveling on the road.

"Yes," he said, "I have put in several years of my life traveling and by profession I am an artist. At present," he said, "I make my home at Hastings, Minn., although up to about twenty-three years ago I lived at the old home where I was born and raised, which was Greensburg, Pa.

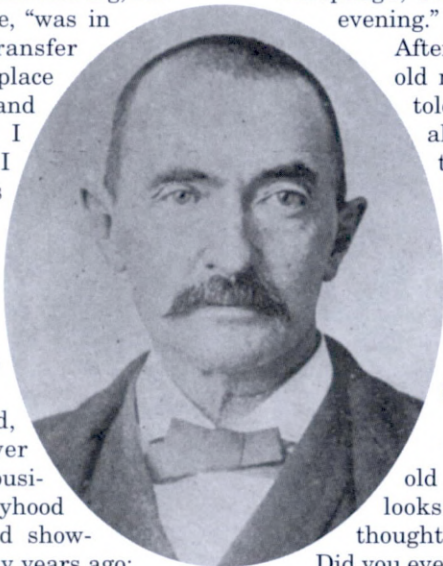
My father," said he, "was in the livery and transfer business in that place for many years, and until long after I grew to manhood I was in business with him."

I said to him, "I thought possibly you some time or other had been in the show business."

"No," he replied, "although I never was in the show business, one of my boyhood friends was an old showman who died many years ago; and up to the time of his death, he and I were the closest of friends. His name was Adam Forepaugh, the old circus man, and he and I bought horses for the army during the civil war in the early '60's, shipping as high as seven and eight carloads a week out of Greensburg, Pa., Pittsburgh and Johnstown. Those three cities were our general shipping places for more than two years. And it was many a day early in the spring of '62 that Adam Forepaugh and I would drive anywhere from twenty-five to sixty miles in a day, and often buy from twenty-five to forty cavalry horses.

"My name is William Bray, and up to this day, I have always been in close touch with the old showman's widow and his son, Adam Forepaugh, Jr. For it was many a hardship that the husband and father and I endured together; and more than once we would stop at a farm house for overnight when it was unable to

drive back into town. You know," said he, "it was different in those days, for there was no such thing as automobiles at that time. Adam Forepaugh's means seemed to be unlimited, and whenever we would run across a smaller dealer that had a carload ready to ship, we would buy them and they would be shipped into Philadelphia, as Forepaugh and Bray horses. Up to the time Adam Forepaugh died, whenever he would show at Greensburg, Pa., the Bray family and all their friends were always the guests of Adam Forepaugh, both afternoon and evening."



After listening to the old man until he had told me all, or nearly all of his life's history, I asked him if he ever saw me before.

Spencer Alexander, Ringling's superintendent of baggage stock. Pfening Archives.

"Why," said the old man, "your face looks familiar, and I thought so from the start.

Did you ever live in Hastings, Minn., or Greensburg, Pa.?"

"No," said I, "My home has always been here in Janesville, but all through the '80s, up to the time of Adam Forepaugh's death, I was his ticket agent and treasurer."

It was then that he grasped me by the hand and said, "I knew that I had seen you, but the twenty-five years that has elapsed made the change too great, and I could not place you."

After I told him my name, the old man said, "Yes, I remember you well and it was you for so many years that gave us our reserved seats, which were always the choicest in the tent."

And when I told him that my wife still corresponded with the old showman's widow and only a few days before she had received a letter from her in which she asked why we did not write oftener, "for," said she, "you and Dave are about the only ones left that I really cared for in the old days," and that the widow, Mrs. Mollie Forepaugh Nagel, was living

in a beautiful home at Atlantic City, about fifty miles from Philadelphia.

The old man said, "I expect to go East and spend a couple of months this summer and I will surely make Adam Forepaugh, Jr. and his mother a visit. For it was the husband and father that for so many years was my best and closest friend. And don't you know," he said, "it is the meeting of old friends like you at an unexpected time that brings the outside world closer to you and makes it smaller."

By this time the dinner call came and the old gentleman said that he would surely have another visit with me before he left. But as he was called away by a telegram the next morning, I did not see him again.

On December 3rd, death came and relieved the suffering of Edward Austin at Delavan, Wisconsin. Ed Austin was possibly the oldest showman living that had been prominent in the business for more than sixty years. He was a boss hostler and I think his first show was the Mabie show, which was the first of its kind to winter in the western country and the one that made Delavan, Wisconsin famous all over the United States as the only winter quarters of a circus in the western country. And Delavan has been famous in the business ever since, for it was back in the early '10s that it furnished another boss hostler by the name of Spencer Alexander, better known in the show business as "Delavan."

Mr. Austin was a native of Norway and started in the show business shortly after coming to his country. He was a man of excellent habits, always attending strictly to business and was considered by all the big shows in the country to be the best man in the business up to the time that he had to retire on account of old age.

After the death of Mr. Mabie, Ed Austin traveled for several years with the Van Amburgh, Howes' London, Barnum & Bailey and always demanding the highest salary of any one in his line of work. He died at the age of eight-three in Delavan, his home town, where he had lived for more than sixty years.

Spencer Alexander was another product of Delavan, which was his nickname in the business for years and who made Janesville his home,

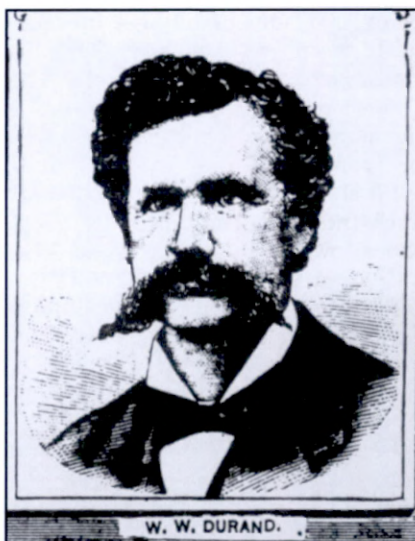
being connected with Burr Robbins for some years. After Mr. Robbins went out of the business, "Delavan" went to the Ringling show, where he remained until the time of his death, some four years ago. And without question, Delavan, Wisconsin, played her part well in furnishing to the show business two of the highest class boss hostlers that ever was in the business.

A tattooed woman, known in the business as Mrs. Irene Woodward, died recently at her home in Philadelphia, aged fifty-three; Irene Woodward, when twenty years of age, joined the Adam Forepaugh show as one of the big features for the side show where she traveled for many years. She was the original tattooed woman and became famous not only in this country, but all over Europe, for she had traveled in every civilized country in the world. During her tour in Europe twenty-five years ago, she appeared before royalty and all the leading medical institutions on the continent, creating a sensation. It is said there are at present over thirty-eight life size figures of her in museums throughout Europe. She is survived by a husband and a son, George E. Woodward, known in the profession as George E. Barnes, of Barnes and West.

December 24, 1915

A letter to the *Billboard*, written by Louis E. Cooke of Newark, N.J., of press agents and brilliant writers he knew in the business, included nearly all of those with whom I traveled in my day and was as close to them in a business way as anyone, for it was to me that they all brought their expense accounts to be checked up, filed away and new ones started. And while all these men were great writers and considered the best that money could hire in their day, they all had their peculiarities in one way or the other.

C. A. Davis, who for many years was press agent back with the Adam Forepaugh shows, was for some years the advance agent and manager of Bob Ingersoll, the lecturer, and it was Charlie's business to look after the newspaper men and their friends on the day of the show, and no one could do it better. It was said of him in the business that he never was in his



W. W. Durand, circus press agent. Circus World Museum collection.

sleeper more than ten or fifteen minutes before the train pulled out, and yet Charlie Davis was never left. Much of his work for the day following he would do in the hotel in the evening after the night show and always stepped on the train about the time that it was ready to pull out for the next town.

Fred Lawrence, another great writer in the business, was of a different type of man, easy going, never in a hurry and yet always had his work done. Fred Lawrence was for some years the man that was hired the year around, and it was he who wrote up all the features of the show during the winter for the coming sea-

W. D. Coxey, press agent on Ringling Bros. Circus. Pfening Archives.



son. Fred was the kind that an easy chair always looked good to, and I recollect one evening he stepped into the ticket wagon and in a second was well down in an easy chair, and I looked up and said, "Fred if the sleepers were a little closer, I would send down and have them bring you up pillow."

Fred looked out from under his hat and said: "Young man, just tear out that funny sheet of yours or you will buy your own lunch this evening after the show is over."

Fred was always a good fellow, commanding a big salary, and after the show in the evening, looked up the best restaurant in the town and always had a friend with him.

W. W. Durand was another great writer and in the early '80s was said to draw a larger salary than anyone connected with the show. For some years Bill Durand's salary was \$7,000 a year and expenses. His home was in Indianapolis, Ind., and while standing on the platform of the depot in that city one morning waiting for a train, Bill Durand dropped dead.

W. D. Coxey was another of the brightest of writers and is still in the business, and many times during the winter you will find some very interesting articles written by Mr. Coxey in the different magazines. Mr. Coxey made his debut with the Adam Forepaugh show more than twenty-five years ago.

Whiting Allen of Ohio was another bright writer, and he also was a student of Adam Forepaugh in the '80s. Many others that Mr. Cooke mentions in his article that were famous in their line of work in the time have passed and gone.

Many of the smaller shows are still traveling in the South, and of all the lonely days in the year, Christmas is the one that brings back recollections of home and loved ones. Although they all have their Christmas tree and scores of presents are sent from home and friends in the north, yet it is all different. They go out and cut down their own tree, for they don't care whether it is an evergreen or pine. It is set up in the dressing room or the cook tent, and no one is overlooked, from manager to the old working man without relations or friends; for they are all one on

Christmas eve, and yet there is much lacking to the people from the North. There is no snow, no jingling of the sleigh bells, which they have been used to at home. But like many other things in the gypsy lives they lead, they make the best of it and have their Christmas just the same. And although I never was unfortunate enough to spend a Christmas under canvas in the South, I have heard many of the performers tell of the way they celebrated it and how they told the youngsters that a certain one with the show was on the outside holding the reindeer while Santa was distributing the presents. But it is safe to say that it is the one day of the year that these people would be only too glad to be at home with the family and friends.

Something like three years ago, the Showmen's League of America was organized and a banquet held at the LaSalle Hotel, but since that time up to a short time ago, they never had a club house or a regular meeting place. The organization has several members, and a short time ago at a meeting of the board of directors, they engaged rooms for permanent headquarters. The meeting was held on December 3rd at the Auditorium Hotel, Chicago, and after a careful survey of all available buildings in the loop, rooms were secured in the Saratoga Hotel. These rooms have been attractively furnished to accommodate a good crowd. They are situated on the second floor and are easily reached from the lobby both by stairs and elevators. These rooms have been attractively furnished with chairs, card tables, and a billiard table, reading table, with amusement journals and magazines; in fact, everything one could desire in the way of comfort and convenience. The importance of this step can hardly be realized. Heretofore, the members of the League have had no place they could call their own. Now they have a home, a place where members can meet and always be assured of a cordial welcome; and this will engender a feeling of satisfaction that could be secured in no other way. Visiting members will find the club a great convenience. A register will be kept and all asked to leave their address while in the city. By doing this, other members or business asso-

ciates can immediately get in touch with them without any delay in searching the various hotels. The club rooms will be in the charge of a member of the organization and will be open from 1 p.m. to 1 a.m. daily. With club rooms, increased membership and increased power for good, the Showmen's League of America will rapidly forge to the front as the largest and most influential organization of showfolk in America and stand as a monument to the best there is in the show world.

December 31, 1915

As we look back over the season of 1915, while at times early in the season it looked as though it would be a destructive one on account of the constant rain and storms that the shows had to encounter, yet on the whole there were but few of them but what weathered the storm. Few of the smaller ones with light bank accounts fell by the wayside, but those that lasted the first sixty days, most of them at least, finished the season with a big balance on the

Hagenbeck-Wallace newspaper ad used in 1915. Pfening Archives.

CIRCUS HAGENBECK-WALLACE CIRCUS

A Circus of 1001 Wonders
FILLING 6 ARENAS!
 Its Triumphs reaches beyond the seas
 NOTHING ELSE LIKE IT IN ALL EARTH'S HISTORY!
Capital Invested, \$3,000,000!

More acts, more features, more thrills than you ever saw before:
 3 Rings, 2 stages, aerial lionesses, acrobats, tightrope walkers and steel girder stunts. Head with CARL HAGENBECK'S performing lions, tigers, ponies, parrots, Polar bears, royal Bengal tigers and untamable lions.

100 ACTS, FEATURES AND SENSATIONS-100
3 RAILROAD TRAINS **22 TENTS** **60 RIDERS**—The Greatest in the World
400 PERFORMERS **8 BANDS** **60 AERIALISTS**, the 6 Flying Ward
60 CLOWNS, the World's Funniest Men
60 ACROBATS **60 CAMELS**
 Carl Hagenbeck's largest and most complete zoological collection.
 Shows of Explanations.

HIGHEST CLASS CIRCUS IN THE WORLD!
 A GLITTERING, BEWILDERING STREET PAGEANT—THREE MILES IN LENGTH, REPRESENTING AN EXPENDITURE OF \$1,000,000 AT 10 O'CLOCK, A.M. CIRCUS DAY.

DOORS TO CARL HAGENBECK'S
200 OPEN AT 1 AND 7 P. M.
PERFORMANCES BEGIN AT 2 AND 8 P. M. ONE 50c TICKET ADMITS TO EVERYTHING. CHILDREN UNDER 10 Years, 25c.

SIOUX FALLS, WEDNESDAY JULY 28

right side of the books. The great Ringling show reported the second best season in their history with only one day lost, and no accidents. And almost during the entire season they were either ahead or behind a heavy storm, never having a blowdown or a railroad accident of any kind.

The Barnum show also, which is controlled by the Ringlings, had a banner season, although they were not so fortunate in every way as the Ringling show. They encountered more storms of the severe kind; and yet after the first sixty days, their business was phenomenal and the great show wound up the season which will always be remembered as among those of the best.

The Hagenbeck-Wallace show, which is in its winter headquarters in West Baden, report one of the best seasons in the history of the show; and in every department the men are busy remodeling for the coming season which Mr. Cory, the manager, writes they are confident will be one of the best.

About two weeks ago a baby girl came to gladden the home of Mr. and Mrs. C. Cory at Peru, Indiana, and Baby Cory was number four. There are two boys and two girls, which Mr. and Mrs. Cory think make a nice family, and while Mrs. Cory is not a feature in the show, she is certainly a feature in the palatial home of the Cory's at Peru where she and her husband have spent the best part of their lives, Mr. Cory being manager and part owner of the Hagenbeck-Wallace show for the past fifteen years.

The Sparks show, which was tied up with the foot and mouth disease in Illinois for some four or five days, closed the season in the South only a short time ago and went into their old winter quarters in North Carolina with many thousands to the good. Yet Mr. Sparks writes that the darkest day that he ever saw in show business was when they were quarantined in Cook County, Illinois, early in September; when, he said, for a time it looked as though it was all over with him in the show business. But the influence of friends at just the right time brought them out of their trouble, and in about one week they were on the road again, playing to good houses everywhere

and finished up in the south a short time ago with a good, prosperous season's business.

On Wednesday of last week, I was in Chicago on business, and as I had a few minutes time before my train, I took a run up into the Saratoga Hotel to take a look at the new quarters of the Showmen's League. Not expecting to find anyone there except my old friend, Mike Bodkin, who is in charge, and sure enough, he met me at the door and took me by the arm, led me into the quarters, raised his hand to the President, John B. Warren, and said, "Gentlemen, one minute. My old friend." The Showmen's League was in session with about seventy-five members present, but I only had time to shake hands and wish them well before train time.

The most important event in the history of the Showmen's League of America, and one destined to have far-reaching results for good, was the opening last Wednesday evening of the permanent clubrooms in the Saratoga Hotel. Showmen from all parts of the country were in attendance, and everyone voted it one of the most joyous occasions it had ever been their privilege to attend. Good fellowship reigned supreme and the renewal of old friendships and the making of new ones, together with the enthusiasm displayed by all, will be the means

of making the Showmen's League of America the strongest and most representative organization of outdoor amusement folk in America.

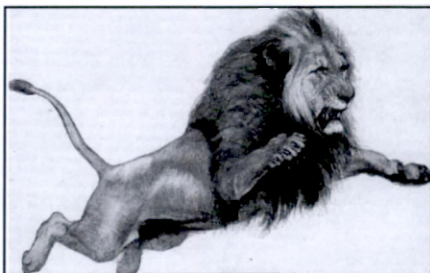
During the business meeting held in the afternoon, Colonel W. F. Cody was unanimously voted an honorary life member of the League, and a telegram was sent to the Colonel at Washington, D. C., apprising him of the action of the Board of Governors. Later in the evening, the following telegram was received from Colonel Cody: "Please extend my grateful appreciation to friends; long live the Showmen's League of America."

A telegram was also received from Dr. Max Thorek, expressing regret at not being able to attend the house

warming and extending congratulations and best wishes for the prosperity of the League. Loving tribute was paid to the memory of Warren A. Patrick, one of the founders and the first secretary of the League. A resolution was passed and a committee consisting of Dick Collins, E. C. Talbot and Lew D. Nichols was appointed, with instructions to forward a wreath to be placed on his grave on Christmas day.

Messrs. Collins, Reiss, Sam Levy, Carruthers, Bodkin, Edward Brown and Felice Bernardi came in for a big share of appreciation for the excellent entertainment furnished. Singing and piano playing started the ball rolling, and then stories and reminiscences flew thick and fast. President Warren called on various members for speeches, and each responded with some interesting anecdote.

The feature attraction of the evening was "Billy Sunday," Rhoda Royal's baby elephant. Quietly an unheralded "Billy" made his appearance in the doorway, and nonchalantly strolled past the assembled showmen up to President Warren, who



was seated in the far end of the clubrooms and acknowledged the greetings of that gentleman with outstretched trunk. "Billy" was an instantaneous hit and was immediately surrounded by a host of friends. Upon motion of Dick Collins, and seconded by "Nobby" Clark, he was unanimously voted a life member of the club and adopted as the official mascot. When questioned, "Billy" admitted he was dry, but by energetic shakes of his head protested against such beverages as milk and water. When beer was mentioned, he madly wagged his head up and down and firmly grasped the bottle handed him and placed the contents where it would do the thirsty elephant the most good.

Lew Nichols presented the League with a handsome miniature elephant and was unanimously accorded a vote of thanks. Eats, smokes and

drinks were served during the evening. One who enjoyed the festivities to the utmost and who expressed himself as being highly pleased that his first visit as a member of the League should be the occasion of the opening of the clubrooms and the housewarming, was W. H. Donaldson.

Many expressions of regret were wired in during the day and evening from members who were unable to attend. Among the members present were J. B. Warren, Charles Address, Lew D. Nichols, Harry S. Noyes, Nat Reiss, Felice Bemardi, W. H. Hildreth, E. C. Talbot, Herbert A. Kline, Frank C. Crosby, H. M. Shoulb, Walter F. Driver, J. C. O'Brien, J. H. Sullivan, J. C. (Nobby) Clark, T. W. Shaw, J. Eddie Brown, G. H. Coleman, Chas G. Kilpatrick, Al Lotto, V. J. Zlv, Homer V. Wilson, John Miller, Sam P. Levy, Charles O. Smith, Frank Leonard, Dick Collins, P. A. McHugh, John McGrall, George Atkinson, Warren B. Irons, W. C. Huggins, Charles F. Bell, Rhoda Royal, Fred Hutchinson, Frank Sweeney, Ray Thompson, Al G. Campbell, Dave Jarrett, Charles March and Walter O. Lindsay. Among the visitors who handed in applications were Steve Woods, F. M. Barnes and W. G. Davidson. At the business meeting held in the afternoon eight other applications were received.

The rumor that the Barnum & Bailey show is to give up Bridgeport as its winter home and go to the winter quarters of the Ringling Brothers circus at Bamboo has been officially denied by one of the Ringling brothers who was in Bridgeport, Conn. during the present week. The Ringling brothers have had many offers for the property on which the headquarters of the circus stands from Bridgeport manufacturers, which undoubtedly started the report that the show is to desert Bridgeport. The property is very valuable and is within a few feet of the railroad.

January 8, 1916

On Saturday last, the first day of the year 1916, about three o'clock in the afternoon, I received a telegram from Charles Ringling, saying, "Brother Al died at one o'clock this afternoon." And although I knew that

Al had been ill for more than a year and had not been able to be with the show last season, yet for most of the time he was able to be up and around. On November 17th at the opening of the new Al Ringling Theatre, he occupied a box with Mrs. Ringling, and after the performance was over, was able to meet friends. When I bade him good bye that evening, he said that he did not feel any the worse for the day's anxiety and excitement. Although I was unable to attend the funeral, I have been able to gather most of the details, and it is fair to say that the entire city of Baraboo and the surrounding country all mourned the loss of Al Ringling, their foremost citizen and one they were all glad to call their friend.

Al being the oldest of the brothers, when his health permitted was always to be found with the great show. His millions and the famous name had never made any change in Al Ringling. While Al had made new friends every day in the business all over the country, he never was the kind that traded an old friend for a new one. I have known him well for more than thirty years and many times have been close to him in business transactions. You could always count on his making good anything that he would tell you.

It was in 1889 at Bloomington, Ill., that three of the brothers came on to the Adam Forepaugh show and bought a few cages, cars and animals of different kinds to help fill up their show, which at that time was a small one. Little did they think at that time that it would only be comparatively a few years until they would own and

The Al Ringling home in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Pfening Archives.



Albert Ringling. December 13, 1852 to January 1, 1916. Pfening Archives.

control all the great shows of the United States. After they got their first start with the wagon show, I think they came to the front faster than any showmen that ever were in the business. This was not only due to their work and close attention to business, but coupled with that was the high class standard with which they always conducted their business. And it is fair to say that the Ringling Bros. have done as much if not more to build up the high standard of circus business than anyone that I have ever known.

A year ago last April, with some friends, I was their guest at the Coliseum in Chicago. Although Al Ringling was busy directing the show, we had only been there a few minutes when he found time to come and shake hands all around and tell us that he wanted us to wait after the show was over, as he wanted to have a visit with us as soon as he could find time. He was acting at that time as equestrian director, which meant that he was blowing the whistle which brought the acts into the ring and sent them out.

I said to him, "Al, why don't you give up this work? There are plenty of others here to do that, and you have certainly been in the harness long enough. It is time that

you had taken a rest."

"Well," he said, "I have done this for years, and I rather enjoy it. And then, too, it seems to me that the show moves a little faster when I blow the whistle."

I never saw the time when I was around the show that Al Ringling was not always busy doing something. I think he was something like James Bailey of the Barnum & Bailey show who told me only a year before [he passed] away when I asked him why he did not give up the work, "Why," he said, "this has been my life work, and I want to die listening to the band play."

I believe if Al Ringling had lived many years longer you could always have found him in some busy spot around the show which had been the pride of his life for so many years, commencing with nothing and gradually building up until it became the greatest and most powerful institution of its kind in the world. Although he died many years too soon, Al Ringling lived to see his life's ambition realized and his name will go down in history as one of the greatest showmen the world has ever known.

The pall bearers at the funeral were all business men of Baraboo, old friends and neighbors who had known Mr. Ringling from boyhood up. The funeral took place at the church where his father and mother had worshipped for many years. The floral offerings were many and beautiful and came from all parts of the

Al Ringling's grave in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Pfening Archives.



United States. And in many cities where the great show will exhibit the coming summer the kind face and warm welcome of Al Ringling will be missed by many old friends.

While death has done his work in thinning the ranks of the Ringling brothers, taking three of them, August, Otto and Al, yet there are four left Alfred T., John, Charles and Henry, all good business men, who have put in their lives in the business and will carry on the two great shows in the same high class manner as heretofore.

January 15, 1916

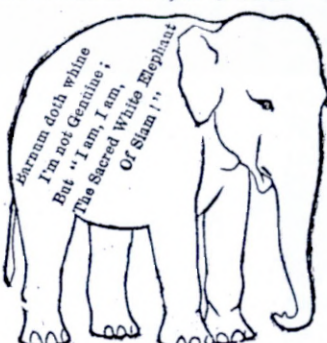
The terrible strike and burning of buildings at Youngstown, Ohio, in the last week carries me back to thirty-two years ago this coming summer when the Adam Forepaugh show was billed to show Youngstown on a Monday. The show arrived in Youngstown early Sunday morning and, for the most part on Sunday, everything seemed to be quiet, as it was not until Monday evening that the toughs from the rolling mills showed up, something like two hundred in number and demanded admission to the big show without tickets and without money. In those days there had been much trouble at different times, also in the coal mining districts of Scranton, Pa., Johnstown, and several other places, and naturally Youngstown was looked on by Adam Forepaugh as a town where something out of the ordinary might happen most any time. As everybody around the show was on guard when these men demanded admission to the show, hundreds of men with the show who had met their kind before, were in readiness, and the two hundred toughs of the town were soon surrounded by three or four times their number, well organized and under good leaders.

While the fight only lasted a short time, it was fast and furious and as it was near the front door and something like a hundred feet from the ticket wagon, I dropped down my door and there was no ticket selling going on until the lot had been cleared of the undesirables, and in such a decided manner that there was no attempt on their part or their friends to play a return engagement.

THE GREAT
FOREPAUGH SHOW!
 1884
LARGEST in the WORLD

Now on its Twentieth Annual Tour, will exhibit in
 Chicago TEN DAYS, commencing

MONDAY
AFTERNOON, JUNE 16



AT STATE AND 22d STS.,
And Every Afternoon and Evening.

JUNE.....	16	17	18	19	20
JUNE.....	21	23	24	25	26

NOT OPEN ON THE LORD'S DAY.

The Sacred White Elephant, the Great
 Troupe of Arabs, the Colossal 3-ring
 Circus, Fuge Hippodrome, Mammoth
 Menagerie, Museum of Marvels, Trained
 Wild Beasts, Great Herd of Elephants,
 etc., etc. Details of all hereafter.
 Grand Street Pageant first forenoon.
 If it rains, takes place next fair day.

Admission, and a Good Seat, - 50 Cents
Children under 9 years, - 25 Cents

Reserved Chairs and General Admission Tickets
 will be for sale during the time of the Exhibition at

REED'S TEMPLE OF MUSIC
Near Corner State and Madison Sts.

Adam Forepaugh Circus ad used in Chicago in 1884.

Although this was one of the fiercest fights that the show had to put with that season, the townspeople of Youngstown, Ohio, did not seem to look on it as anything much out of the ordinary, and the show played to two big houses in Youngstown, both afternoon and evening. In those days there were perhaps a half dozen or more towns much on the same order as Youngstown, and though in most of them we had to pay a large license which was supposed to be for protection, it seemed that when it came to a show-down, the show had to protect itself. There were a few towns of this character in the west, but most of them were in the east, either in the coal mining districts or the big manufacturing towns. But I had supposed, until reading the account last week, that the days of the toughs rul-

ing cities the size of Youngstown had long since been a thing of the past. This last outbreak certainly has been the worst of all. It was in '87 that the Adam Forepaugh show had to fight their way almost day and night at Johnstown, Pa., to give two exhibitions. The town at that time was in the hands of a striking mob, and it was only the size of the Forepaugh show that made it possible for them to give two exhibitions and get away without the loss of any of the men. At Scranton, Pa., about the same time, we showed at the foot of a mountain. Before time for the show to open in the afternoon several toughs of the town climbed up the mountain and pried loose boulders many feet in circumference which came rolling down the side of the mountain and through the tents; and had the show been going on, hundreds of people might have lost their lives. Mr. Forepaugh was not long in putting men on guard all along the side of the mountain and no citizen was allowed in that district. These guards traveled the side of the mountain until the show was taken down at night and on its way to the train. These were a few of the hardships that the show of more than thirty years ago had to contend with. One of my Christmas presents this year, and one that I shall always prize highly, was that [picture] of a boy bareback rider some ten or twelve years of age, who had accidentally been thrown from his horse and been injured badly and carried back into the dressing room where the doctor was summoned. Friends of the little fellow, including the old clown and other anxious performers, were bending over him all anxious to do what they could to relieve his suffering. The picture was so true to life and one that I have seen so many times in the business, that a Christmas present of many times its intrinsic value could not have taken its place and will always be remembered as my one Christmas present of 1915. In 1884 the Forepaugh show came west and on a Monday showed in Sioux Falls and the people were there from far and near. After nearly all the people had gone into the show in the afternoon, a gentleman came up and asked me for two adult tickets and three half tickets for children. Although I had not seen this

man since he was fifteen or sixteen years of age, I knew him in a second. His name was Walter Riley. Walter and I had crossed the fields and climbed rail fences for several years when kids. Both our fathers' farms joined out in Green county.

He handed me a five dollar bill for his ticket. I took at look at it and handed it back to him saying I did not like the looks of it. With a surprised look on his face, Mr. Riley said: "I got that bill from a merchant here in town, and I am surprised at it not being a good one. I don't think I have change enough for the tickets aside from that and I don't know what to do. I don't see anyone here that I know." I reached around and gave him five reserved seat tickets and handed them to him with his five dollar bill and said, "Mr. Riley, you take these tickets and take your family to the show, and you can stop on your way out after the show and pay me." When I called him by name, he took another look at me and said, "I will not go into the show until I find out who you are and how you came to know that my name was Riley." I had to tell Walter who I was before he would go into the show, and then he could hardly believe that it was Dave Watt, his old school mate from the farm near Juda. But I finally got him to take his family and go into the show and told him I would join them after the show was out, which I did and kept them for the concert and then took them to the cook tent with me for supper. It is fair to say that if

any of the Riley family are living today, that they are still talking about the day that they struck an old friend with the circus. For a day like that made an impression on people and especially those on a farm in a comparatively new country, which that was at that time. According to the custom for the last three years of two or three shows who have made their winter quarters in San Antonio, Texas, they gave their annual banquet and Christmas tree at the Gunter Hotel in that city. This was the third banquet and Christmas tree of its kind and it was carried out on a big scale. Those prominent among their number who had been removed in the last year by death, their chair was draped in mourning and bore the name of the occupant at the last banquet.

Among others whose chair was vacant was that of Warren A. Patrick, formerly of this city. In an address made by J. H. Kirkpatrick, Warren A. Patrick was paid a fine tribute. Mr. Kirkpatrick said that Warren Patrick had been prominent in the business for years and would be missed by a score of friends. Summed up, the Third Annual Showmen's Christmas tree and banquet was the most unique and comprehensive holiday season entertainment ever given in San Antonio or in probably any other city in the United States. Mr. Percy Tyrrol, manager of the Gunter Hotel at which the affair was held, proved himself to be a real friend of the showmen and was willing and ready

at all times to lend his aid in spreading good cheer and helping the showmen in everything undertaken. The celebration opened at nine o'clock Christmas morning with music, the first piece being the Serenaders with Prof. Jamison leading. At ten a.m. there was a Christmas concert given by the orchestra. At ten-thirty the side show and annex was opened before a large crowd and was directed by Rodney Krail and George F. Donovan. The exhibits were advertised in the old reliable circus way, by flaming canvas posters, with their curiosity-exciting captions. Hundreds of gifts were distributed and Manager Tyrrol was presented with a beautiful diamond pin by the showmen present.

The Big Show and Circus under the direction of Tom McNew and "Plain Dave," opened shortly after 1 p.m. It was a dyed-in-the wool sawdust ring, and even though a number of vaudeville acts participated, the circus atmosphere predominated. Jay Coughlin acted as equestrian director in a creditable way. Sam C. Eldrige delivered an address of welcome to San Antonio in the absence of Mayor Brown, to which Mr. Pletz, chairman of the committee on arrangements, responded. A pleasing feature after the banquet was the singing of eight-year-old Lawrence Sparks with the ostrich concession of the DeKreko Brothers shows. All told it was one big, successful celebration that will linger in the hearts of the showmen and townspeople present for years to come.

My association with the *Bandwagon* started in 1961.

Since then 247 issues of the magazine have come out of my basement.

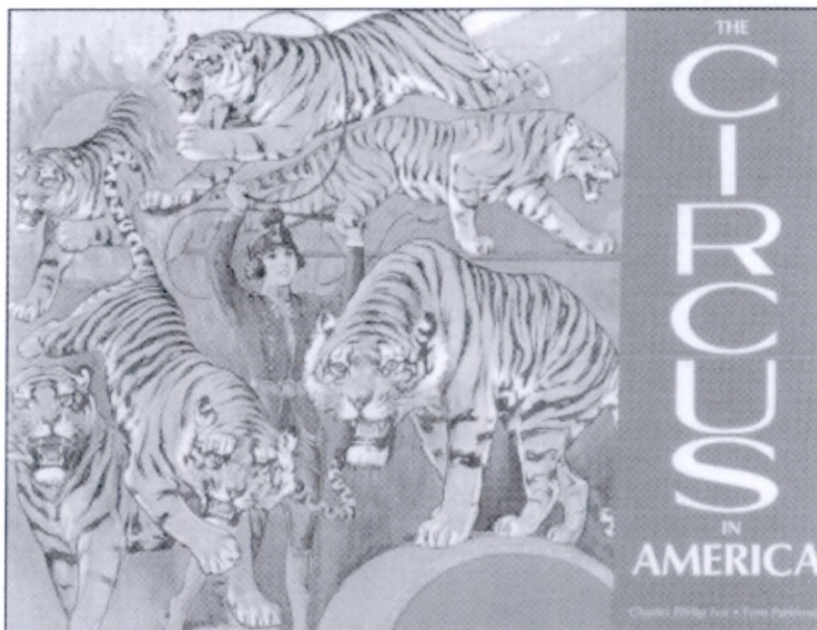
I have enjoyed producing everyone of them. This is the largest issue ever published. It is dedicated to the memory of my old pal Joe Bradbury.

Happy Holidays

Fred D. Pfening, Jr.
Editor and Publisher



ANNOUNCING THE RETURN OF A CLASSIC BOOK ON THE CIRCUS...



THE CIRCUS IN AMERICA

By Charles Philip Fox and Tom Parkinson

Hennessey + Ingalls is happy to bring back into print a classic book on the American circus. **THE CIRCUS IN AMERICA** documents with verve and authority this most populist form of American entertainment. The book has 96 full-color reproductions of the eye-popping posters that announced the arrival of the circus, as well as almost two hundred black and white archival photographs of the great circus acts and behind-the-scenes action under the Big Top. The illustrations are from the unsurpassed collections of the Circus World Museum of Baraboo, Wisconsin, and are complimented by an informed and amusing text by two well-known circus authorities.

2002. 12 x 9 in., profusely illustrated in color and b+w.
Cloth, dust jacket. ISBN 0-940512-33-5

\$49.95

Order from your local bookstore or from



HENNESSEY + INGALLS

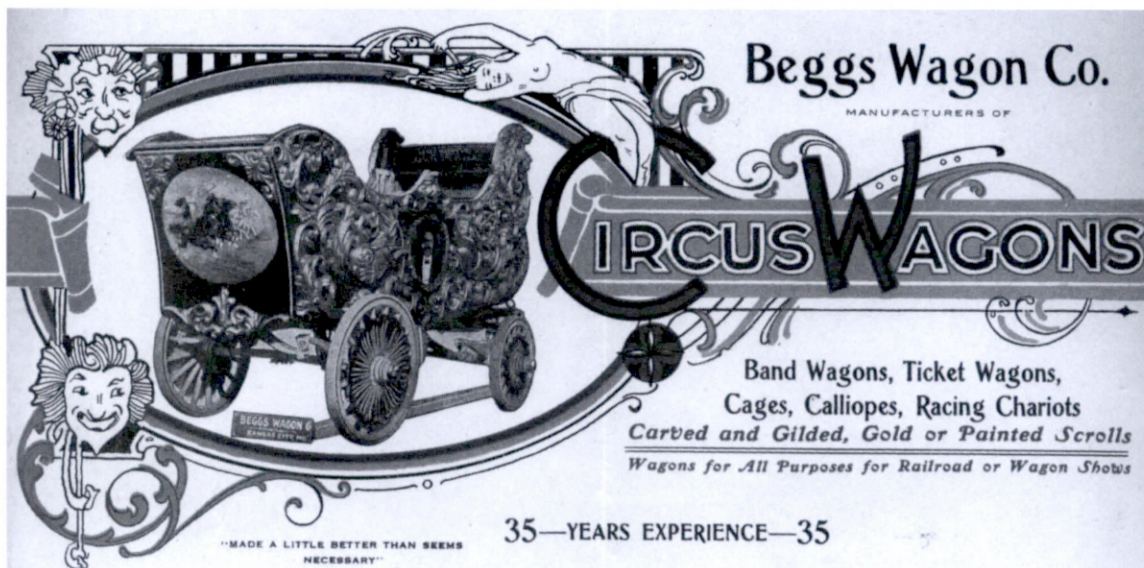
1254 3rd Street Promenade
Santa Monica CA 90401
Phone 310 458-9074
Fax 310 394-2928
E-mail: hibks@aol.com

PEACE ON EARTH

CIRCUS HALL OF FAME PERU, INDIANA

We welcome the Circus Historical Society convention
to Peru in 2003.

Bill Kisiska's Letterheads



The Beggs Wagon Company of Kansas City, Missouri was a large supplier of circus wagons in the early part of the last century. This letterhead was used from 1912 to 1915. It was printed in black, red and gold.



· YOUTH · ENERGY · DEDICATION · DETERMINATION · PRACTICE · TRUST · ACHIEVEMENT · PRIDE

Peru, Indiana—
Home of The Greatest
Amateur Circus
On Earth



★ 4-Lane Cradle

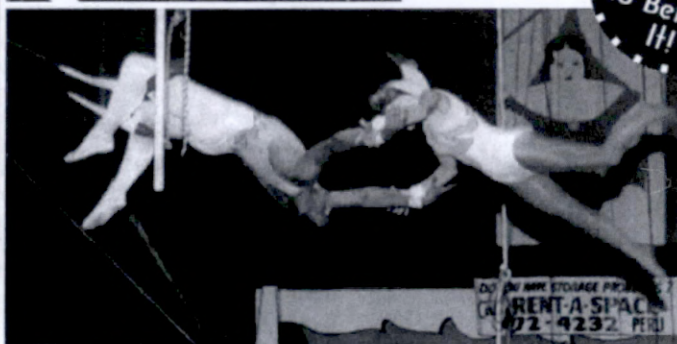


★ 3 High on High Wire

Come see us
this Summer.*
Our 44th Season!

*Watch for schedule of performances
in a future issue of
White Tops

You
Must See it
To Believe
It!



Flying Trapeze ★



**Wishing You A
Magical Holiday Season!**

BANDWAGON

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Vol. 46, No. 6 NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2002
FRED D. PFENING, JR. EDITOR AND PUBLISHER
Fred D. Pfening III, Associate Editor

Bandwagon, The Journal of the Circus Historical Society, Inc. (USPS 406-390) (ISSN 0005-4968), is published bi-monthly by the Circus Historical Society, Inc., 1075 West Fifth Ave., Columbus, OH 43212-2691. Periodicals Postage Paid at Columbus, OH. Postmaster: Send address changes to Bandwagon, 1075 West Fifth Ave., Columbus, OH 43212-2691.

Editorial, advertising and circulation office is located at 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, OH 43221. Phone (614) 294-5361. Advertising rates are: Full page \$100, half page \$60, quarter page \$35. Minimum ad \$25.

Bandwagon, new membership and subscription rate: \$34.00 per year in the United States; \$39.00 per year outside United States. Single copies \$5.00 plus \$2 postage. Please direct all concerns regarding address changes and lack of delivery to the editor.

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. Al Stencell, President, 15 Lark St., Toronto, Ont., Can, M4L-3M5; Robert F. Sabia, Vice President, 3100 Parkside La., Williamsburg, VA 23185; Dave Price, Secretary-Treasurer, 1954 Old Hickory Blvd., Brentwood, TN 37027-4014.

Trustees: Fred Dahlinger, Jr., 45 Roblee Rd., Baraboo, WI 53913; John McConnell, 1 Skyline Dr., Morristown, NJ 07960; Fred D. Pfening, Jr., 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, OH 43221; Fred D. Pfening III, 1075 W. Fifth Ave., Columbus, OH 43212; Dave Price, 1954 Old Hickory Blvd., Brentwood, TN 37027; John F. Polacsek, 5980 Lannoo, Detroit, MI 48236; Richard J. Reynolds III, 1186 Warrenhall Lane N.E., Atlanta, GA 30319; Robert F. Sabia, 3100 Parkside La., Williamsburg, VA 23185; Al Stencell, 15 Lark St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4L-3M5. Trustee Emeritus: Stuart L. Thayer..

THE FRONT COVER

In 1880 and 1881 the Sells brothers-owned S. H. Barrett Circus used the New Great Pacific Circus title. The calliope shown was an artist's creation.

This lithograph was printed by Strobridge and is in the Shelburne Museum collection.

THE 2003 CHS CONVENTION

Al Stencell, CHS President, announced Peru, Indiana will be the location of the 2003 Circus Historical Society convention July 16-19.

Features will be the Peru Festival parade and circus, the International Circus Hall of Fame circus and museum, and the county museum.

Full details and hotel arrangements will appear in the January-February 2003 *Bandwagon*.

THE SEASON'S REVIEW

Work has begun on the review of the 2002 circus season. Information and photos are needed for Leibling Bros.; Circo Mundial; Star Bros.; Circo Garcia; UniverSoul No. 1; Moscow Circus; Gatti; Jose Cole; Famous Cole; Yankee Doodle; Cirque Equinox; Bentley Bros.; Vidbel; Walker; Soleil Vareki; Eos

and Zingaro. Any local animal rights newspaper coverage will help.

NEW MEMBERS

Manuel Noriega 4323
 21 El Carmello Circle
 Oakland, CA 94619-1605

Stuart K. Hicks 4324
 29 View St., Peppermint Grove
 Western Australia.
 6011 Australia

Paul E. Johnson 4325
 Dept. of History
 University of South Carolina
 Columbia, SC 29308

Charles Hagedon 4326
 1291 Crisfield Circle
 Greenwood, IN 46142

James H. Olson 4327
 3040 E. 170th St.
 Lansing, IL 60438-1116

Jack Getz 4328
 3282 S. Salida Way
 Aurora, CO 80013-2262

Joel Wolin 4329
 1081 Bull Valley Rd.
 Aspers, PA 17304

Kathleen Kotcher 4330
 1118 Fairmont St. NW
 Washington, DC 20009

REINSTATED

Rev. Charles Schluter 2868
 130 W. Cedar St.
 Platteville, WI 53818-2457

Kathleen J. Overr 4187
 1558 Winona Blvd.
 Los Angeles, CA 90027

L. B. Rinehart 3800
 6508 Harmson Rd.,
 Ft. Worth, TX 76180

ADDRESS CHANGES

Each time the *Bandwagon* is mailed a number of copies are returned by the post office because of address changes.

The post office charges \$1.65 each time a magazine is returned. Please advise address changes in advance. Returned copies can not be replaced at no charge.

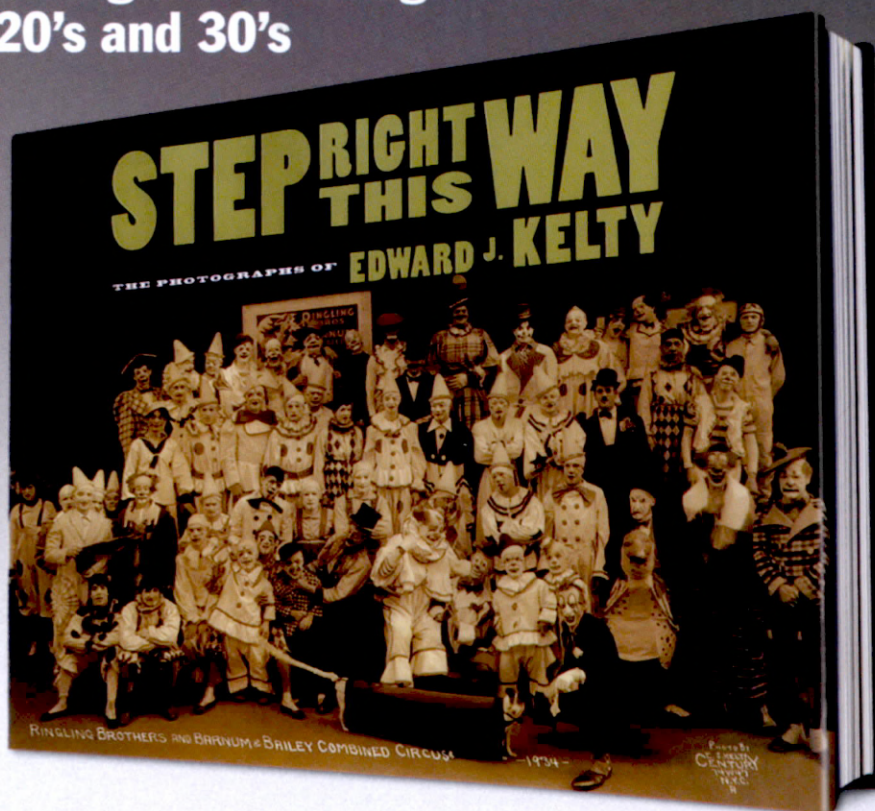
BACK ISSUES OF BANDWAGON

1966-Jan.-Feb.
 1967-Nov.-Dec.
 1968-All but Jan.-Feb.
 1969-July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.
 1970-All but July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.
 1971-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.
 1972-All available.
 1973-All but Nov.-Dec.
 1974-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.
 1975-All available.
 1976-All but Jan.-Feb., Nov.-Dec.
 1977-All but Mar.-Ap.
 1978-All available.
 1979-All but Jan.-Feb.
 1980-1986-All available.
 1987-All but Nov.-Dec.
 1988-2002-All available.

Price is \$4.00 each. Add \$2.00 postage for one issue, \$5.00 for more than one issue. Please select substitutes in case we are out of any of above.

BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES
 2515 DORSET RD.
 COLUMBUS, OH 43221

Over 100 stunning photographs documenting the traveling circus in the 1920's and 30's



"Circus life has long captivated photographers as well as the general public with its bizarre and romantic mix of tents and animals, freaks and exotic performers. Kelty was an insider—traveling with various East Coast circuses for nearly 20 years. His simple, frontal group portraits make no pretense at being art—Kelty sought no recognition. His adaptation of the commercial genre of "banquet photography" brings us a record of circus life as it once was."

Andrew Eskind
International Museum of Photography at
George Eastman, Rochester, New York

"The work of Edward J. Kelty is proof that one can still find remarkable pictures by forgotten photographers. These elaborately staged images are cultural documents of an era when the "big-top" traveled the country by rail and was a major entertainment for the American public"

Willis E. Hartshorn, Director
International Center of Photography

"Edward Kelty made a great contribution to the recording of American circus history. His photographs document large and small shows of the 1920's and 1930's. No one else operated a one man business as he did."

Fred D. Pfening, Jr.
Editor and Publisher of Bandwagon

"Step Right This Way" is available at all Barnes & Noble stores and bn.com To order, send a check or money order to Wordwise Press with this coupon.

Please send my order of "Step Right This Way"

The Photographs of Edward J. Kelty to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (optional) _____

Send _____ copies at \$30.00 each

NYC residents add \$2.48 per copy
(8.25% sales tax)

BW 1 _____ Total _____

Mail to: A. Siegel, Wordwise Press
211 Central Park West, New York, NY 10024
Call us at 212 707 3695 for special discount prices on bulk purchases.

Happy Holidays

Dear Santa,
Please bring
me some:
elephants
tigers
dancing horses
clowns
trapeze artists
tightrope walkers
acrobats

From

**RINGLING
& BROS.**



**BARNUM
& BAILEY**

© 2001 Feld Entertainment

Visit us 365 days a year at www.ringling.com
For great gift ideas, visit <http://store.ringling.com>